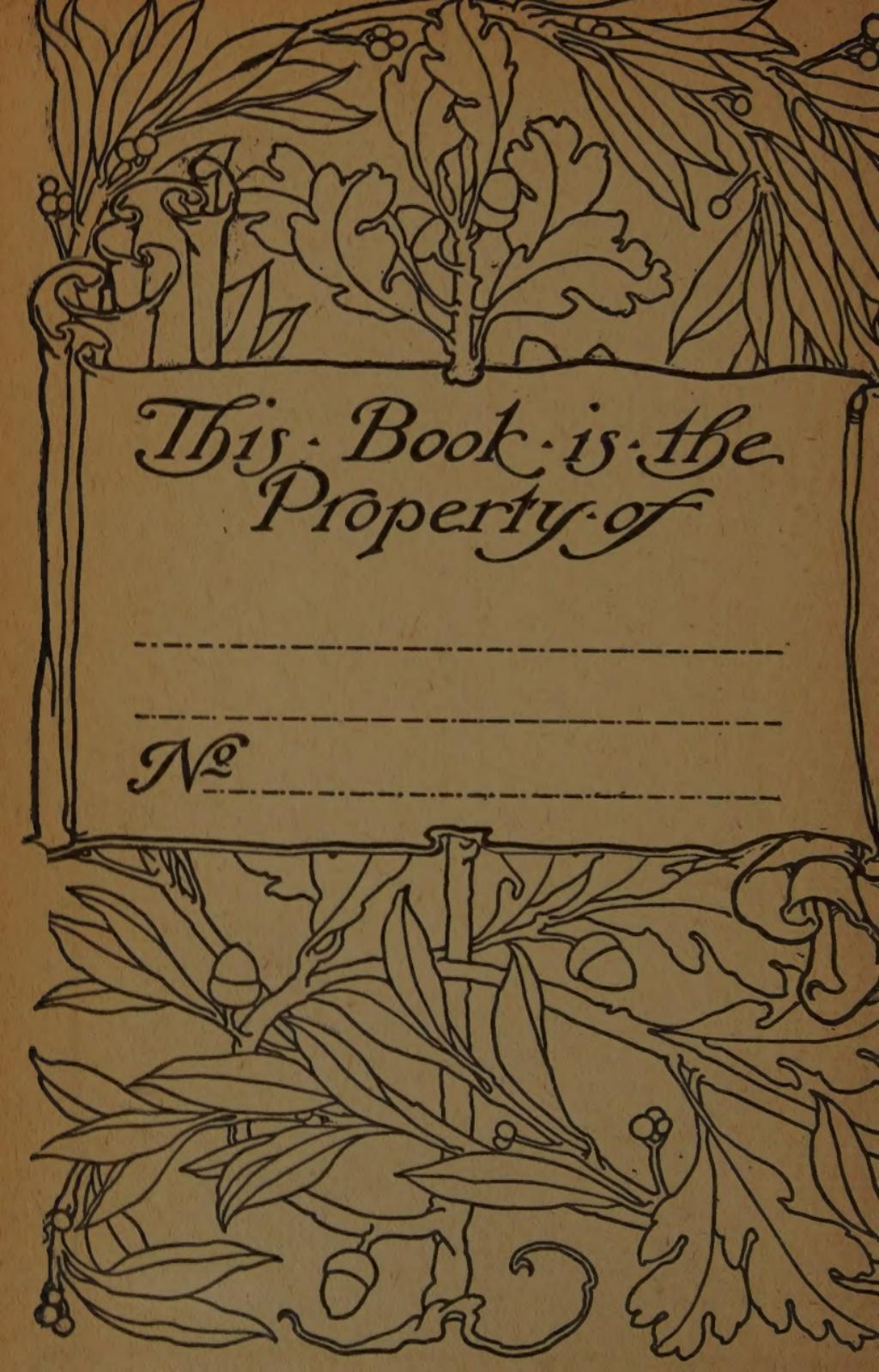


ISHMAEL

E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

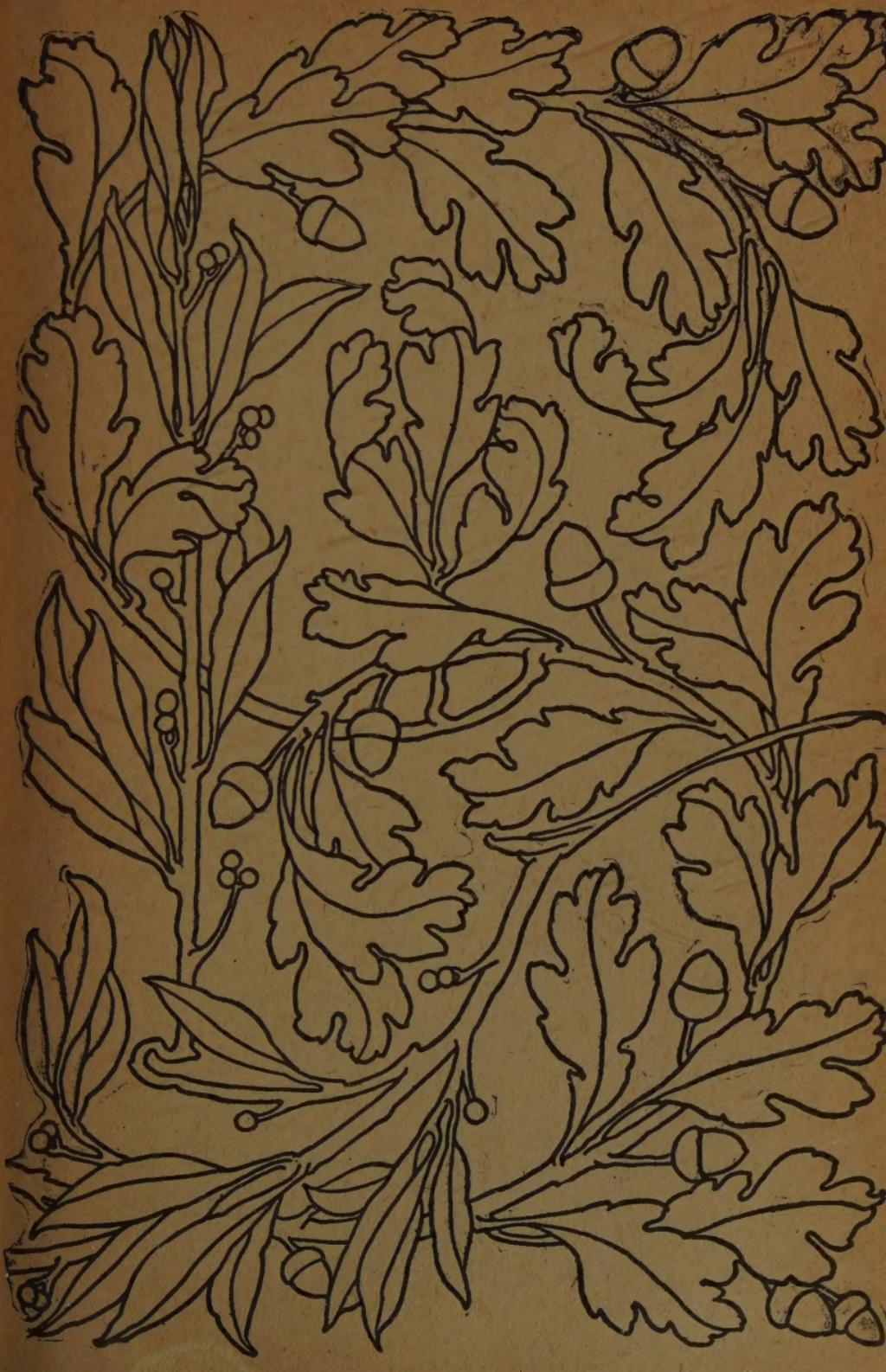
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ISHMAEL

OR

IN THE DEPTHS

BY

MRS. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of "Self-Raised," "The Changed Brides,"
"Fair Play," "How He Won Her," etc.



VOLUME II

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Besides her greatest novel, *Ishmael*, and its sequel, *Self-Raised: or Out of the Depths*, some of Mrs. Southworth's novels are: *Retribution* (1849); *Deserted Wife* (1850); *Shannondale* and *The Mother-in-Law* (1851); *Children of the Isle* and *The Foster Sisters* (1852); and: *The Family Doom*; *Prince of Darkness*; *The Bride's Fate*; *The Changed Brides*; *How He Won Her*; *Fair Play*; *Fallen Pride*; *The Widow's Son*; *The Bride of Llewellyn*; *The Fortune-Seeker*; *Allworth Abbey*; *The Bridal Eve*; *The Fatal Marriage*; *Love's Labor Won*; *The Lost Heiress*; *Gipsy's Prophecy*; *The Discarded Daughter*; *The Three Beauties*; *Vivia: or, Secret Power*; *The Haunted Homestead*; *The Lady of the Isle*; *India: or, The Pearl of Pearl River*; *The Curse of Clifton*; *Unknown*; *The Hidden Hand*; *Capitola's Peril*; *Gloria*; *David Lindsay*; *Why Did He Wed Her? For Whose Sake?* *Dorothy Harcourt's Secret*; *To His Fate*; *A Tortured Heart*; *The Test of Love*; *The Trail of the Serpent*; *The Unloved Wife*; *Lilith*; *The Lost Lady of Love*; *The Struggle of a Soul*; *A Husband's Devotion*; *Gertrude Haddon*; *Reunited*; *Only a Girl's Heart*; *The Mystery of Raven Rocks*; *Nearest and Dearest*; *Little Nea's Engagement*; *The Halloweve Mystery*; *Tried for Her Life*; *A Beautiful Fiend*; *Victor's Triumph*; *The Lost Heir of Linlithgow*; *A Noble Lord*; *Sweet Love's Atonement*; *Zenobia's Suitors*; *Endora: or, The False Princess*; *A Leap in the Dark*; *The Artist's Love*; *The Widows of Widowville*; *A Skeleton in the Closet*; *Brandon Coyle's Wife*.

“I am undone; there is no living, none,
If Bertram be away. It were all one,
That I should love a bright particular star,
And think to wed it, he is so above me,
The hind that would be mated by the lion,
Must die for love. 'Twas pretty though a plague
To see him every hour; to sit and draw
His arched brow, his hawking eyes, his curls
In our heart's table; heart too capable
Of every line and trick of his sweet favor.”

—SHAKESPEARE.

Oh, mighty perseverance!

Oh, courage, stern and stout!
That wills and works a clearance
Of every troubling doubt,—
That cannot brook denial
And scarce allows delay,
But wins from every trial
More strength for every day!

He feels, he feels within him
That courage self-possest,—
That force that yet shall win him,
The brightest and the best,—
The stalwart Saxon daring
That steadily steps on,
Unswerving and unsparing
Until the goal be won!

Let circumstance oppose him,
He bends it to his will;
And if the flood o'erflows him,
He dives and stems it still;
No hindering dull material
Shall conquer or control
His energies ethereal,
His gladiator soul!
Let lower spirits linger,
For hint and beck and nod,
He always sees the finger
Of an onward urging God!

—M. F. TUPPER.

CHAPTER XLII.

MEANWHILE the carriage traveling slowly reached Tanglewood. Pacing up and down the long piazza in front of the house was Judge Merlin. He was a rather singular-looking man of about forty-five years of age. He was very tall, thin and bony, with high aquiline features, dark complexion and iron-gray hair, which he wore long and parted in the middle. He was habited in a loose jacket, vest and trousers of brown linen, and wore a broad-brimmed straw hat on his head, and large slippers, down at the heel, on his feet. He carried in his hand a lighted pipe of common clay, and he walked with a slow, swinging gait, and an air of careless indifference to all around him. Altogether, he presented the ideal of a civilized Indian chief, rather than that of a Christian gentleman. Tradition said that the blood of King Powhatan flowed in Randolph Merlin's veins, and certainly his personal appearance, character, tastes, habits and manners, flavored the legend.

On seeing the carriage approach he had taken the clay pipe from his mouth and sauntered forward. On seeing the strange burden that his daughter supported in her arms, he came down to the side of the carriage, exclaiming:

“Who have you got there, Claudia?”

“Oh, papa, it is Ishmael Worth! He has killed himself, I fear, in saving me! My horses ran away, ran directly toward the steeps above the river, and would have plunged over if he had not started forward and turned their heads in time; but the horses, as they turned, knocked him down and ran over him!” cried Claudia, in almost breathless vehemence.

“What was Sam doing all that time?” inquired the judge, as he stood contemplating the insensible boy.

“Oh, papa, he sprang from the carriage as soon as the horses became unmanageable and ran away! But don’t stop here asking useless questions! Lift him out and take him into the house! Gently, papa! gently,” said Claudia, as Judge Merlin slipped his long arms under the youth’s body and lifted him from the carriage.

“Now, then, what do you expect me to do with him?” inquired Judge Merlin, looking around as if for a convenient place to lay him on the grass.

“Oh, papa, take him right into the spare bedroom on the lower floor! and lay him on the bed. I have sent for a doctor to attend him here,” answered Claudia, as she sprang from the carriage and led the way into the very room she had indicated.

“He is rather badly hurt,” said the judge, as he laid Ishmael upon the bed and arranged his broken limbs as easily as he could.

“‘Rather badly!’ he is crushed nearly to death! I told you the whole carriage passed over him!” cried Claudia, with a hysterical sob, as she bent over the boy.

“Worse than I thought,” continued the judge, as he proceeded to unbutton Ishmael’s coat and loosen his clothes. “Did you say you sent for a doctor?”

“Yes! as soon as it happened! He ought to be here in an hour from this!” replied Claudia, wringing her hands.

“His clothes must be cut away from him; it might do his fractured limbs irreparable injury to try to draw off his coat and trousers in the usual manner. Leave him to me, Claudia, and go and tell old Katie to come here and bring a pair of sharp shears with her,” ordered the judge.

Claudia stooped down quickly, gave one wistful, longing, compassionate gaze at the still, cold white face of the sufferer, and then hurried out to obey her father’s directions. She sent old Katie in, and then threw off her hat and mantle and sat down on the step of the door to watch for the doctor’s approach, and also to be at hand to hear any tidings that might come from the room of the wounded boy.

More than an hour Claudia remained on the watch without seeing any one. Then, when suspense grew intolerable, she impulsively sprang up and silently hastened to the door of the sick room and softly rapped.

The judge came and opened it.

“Oh, papa, how is he?”

“Breathing, Claudia, that is all! I wish to Heaven the doctor would come! Are you *sure* the messenger went after him?”

“Oh, yes, papa, I am sure! Do let me come in and see him!”

“It is no place for you, Claudia; he is partially undressed; I will take care of him.”

And with these words the judge gently closed the door in his daughter’s face.

Claudia went back to her post.

“Why *doesn’t* the doctor come! And, oh! why *doesn’t* Reuben Gray or Hannah come? It is dreadful to sit here and wait!” she exclaimed, as with a sudden resolution she sprang up again, seized her hat and ran out of the house with the intention of proceeding directly to the Gray’s cottage.

But a few paces from the house she met the doctor’s gig.

“Oh, Dr. Jarvis, I am so glad you have come at last!” she cried.

“Who is it that is hurt?” inquired the doctor.

“Ishmael Worth, our overseer’s nephew!”

“How did it happen?”

“Didn’t they tell you?”

“No.”

"Oh, poor boy! He threw himself before my horses to stop them as they were running down the steeps over the river; and he turned them aside, but they knocked him down and ran over him!"

"Bad! very bad! poor fellow!" said the doctor, jumping from his gig as he drew up before the house.

Claudia ran in before him, leading the way to the sick chamber, at the door of which she rapped to announce the arrival. This time old Katie opened the door, and admitted the doctor.

Claudia, excluded from entrance, walked up and down the hall in a fever of anxiety.

Once old Katie came out and Claudia arrested her.

"What does the doctor say, Katie?"

"He don't say nothing satisfactory, Miss Claudia. Don't stop me, please! I'm sent for bandages and things!"

And Katie hurried on her errand, and presently reappeared with her arms full of linen and other articles, which she carried into the sick room. Later, the doctor came out attended by the judge.

Claudia waylaid them with the questions:

"What is the nature of his injuries? are they fatal?"

"Not fatal; but very serious. One leg and arm are broken; and he is very badly bruised; but worst of all is the great shock to his very sensitive nervous system," was the reply of Dr. Jarvis.

"When will you see him again, sir?" anxiously inquired Claudia.

"In the course of the evening. I am not going back home for some hours, perhaps not for the night; I have a case at Gray's."

"Indeed! that is the reason, then, I suppose, why no one has answered my message to come up and see Ishmael. But who is sick there?" inquired Claudia.

"Mrs. Gray. Good afternoon, Miss Merlin," said the doctor, shortly, as he walked out of the house attended by the judge.

Claudia went to the door of Ishmael's room and rapped softly. Old Katie answered the summons.

"Can I come in now, Katie?" asked Miss Merlin, a little impatiently.

"Oh, yes, I s'pose so; I s'pose you'd die, if you didn't!" answered this privileged old servant, holding open the door for Claudia's admittance.

She passed softly into the darkened room, and approached the bedside. Ishmael lay there swathed in linen bandages and extended at full length, more like a shrouded corpse than a living boy. His eyes were closed and his face was livid.

"Is he asleep?" inquired Claudia, in a tone scarcely above her breath.

"Sort o' sleep. You see, arter de doctor done set his arm an' leg, an' splintered of 'em up, an' boun' up his wounds an' bruises, he gib him some'at to 'pose his nerves and make him sleep, an' it done hev him into dis state; which you see yourse'f is nyder sleep nor wake nor dead nor libe."

Claudia saw indeed that he was under the effects of morphia. And with a deep sigh of strangely blended relief and apprehension, Claudia sank into a chair beside his bed.

And old Katie took that opportunity to slip out and eat her "bit of dinner," leaving Claudia watching.

At the expiration of an hour, Katie returned to her post. But Claudia did not therefore quit hers. She remained seated beside the wounded boy. All that day he lay quietly, under the influence of morphia. Once the judge looked in to inquire the state of the patient, and on being told that the boy still slept, he went off again. Late in the afternoon the doctor came again, saw that his patient was at ease, left directions for his treatment, as soon as he should awake, and then prepared to depart.

"How is the sick woman at Gray's?" inquired Claudia.

"Extremely ill. I am going immediately back there to remain until all is over; if I should be particularly wanted here, send there for me," said the doctor.

"Yes; but I am very sorry Mrs. Gray is so ill! She is Ishmael's aunt. What is the matter with her?"

"Humph!" answered the doctor. "Good night, Miss Claudia. You will know where to send for me, if I am wanted here."

"Yes; but I am so sorry about Gray's wife! Is she in danger?" persisted Claudia.

"Yes."

"I am very sorry; but what ails her?" persevered Claudia.

"Good evening, Miss Merlin," replied the doctor, lifting his hat and departing.

"The man is half asleep; he has not answered my question," grumbled Claudia, as she returned to her seat by the sick bed.

Just then the bell rang for the late dinner, and Claudia went out and crossed the hall to the dining room, where she joined her father. And while at dinner she gave him a more detailed account of her late danger, and the manner in which she was saved.

Once more in the course of that evening Claudia looked in upon the wounded boy, to ascertain his condition before retiring to her room. He was still sleeping.

"If he should wake up, you must call me, no matter what time of night it is, Katie," said Miss Merlin, as she left the sick chamber.

"Yes, miss," answered Katie, who nevertheless made up her mind to use her own discretion in the matter of obedience to this order.

Claudia Merlin was not, as Ishmael was, of a religious disposition, yet nevertheless before she retired to bed she did kneel and pray for his restoration to life and health; for, somehow, the well-being of the peasant youth was very precious to the heiress. Claudia could not sleep, she lay tumbling and tossing upon a restless and feverish couch. The image of that mangled and bleeding youth as she first saw him on the river bank, was ever before her. The gaze of his intensely earnest eyes as he raised them to hers, when he inquired, "Are you safe?"—and the deep smile of joy with which they closed again when she answered: "I am safe"—haunted her memory and troubled her spirit. Those looks, those tones, had made a revelation to Claudia!—That the peasant boy presumed to love her!—*her!* Claudia Merlin, the heiress, angel-born, who scarcely deemed there was in all democratic America a fitting match for her!

During the excitement and terror of the day, while the extent of Ishmael's injuries was still unknown and his life seemed in extreme danger, Claudia had not had leisure to receive the fact of Ishmael's love, much less to reflect upon its consequences. But now that all was known and suspense was over, now in the silence and solitude of her bedchamber, the images and impressions of the day returned to her with all their revelations and tendencies, and filled the mind of Claudia with astonishment and consternation! That Ishmael Worth should be capable of loving *her*, seemed to Miss Merlin as miraculous as it would be for Fido to be capable of talking to her! And in the wonder of the affair she almost lost sight of its presumption!

But how should she deal with this presuming peasant boy, who had dared to love her, to risk his life to save hers, and to let the secret of his love escape him?

For a long time Claudia could not satisfactorily answer this question. And this was what kept her awake all night. To neglect him, to absent herself from his sick room, or while in it to treat him with coldness, would be a cruel return for the sacrifice he had made for her and the service he had rendered her; it would be, besides, making the affair of too much importance; and finally, it would be "against the grain" of Claudia's own heart; for in a queenly way she loved this Ishmael very dearly indeed; much more dearly than she loved Fido, or any four-footed pet she possessed; and if he had happened to have been killed in her service, Claudia would have abandoned herself to grief for weeks afterwards; and she would have had a headstone recording his heroism placed over his grave.

After wearying herself out with conjectures as to what would be the becoming line of conduct in a young princess who should discover that a brave peasant had fallen in love with her, Claudia at length determined to ignore the fact that had come to her knowledge and act just as if she had never discovered or even suspected its existence.

"My dignity cannot suffer from his presumptuous folly, so long as I do not permit him to see that I know it; and as for the rest, this love may do his character good; may elevate it!" And having laid this balm to her wounded pride, Claudia closed her eyes.

So near sunrise was it when Miss Merlin dropped off that, once asleep, she continued to sleep on until late in the day.

Meanwhile all the rest of the family were up and astir. The doctor came early and went in to see his patient. The judge breakfasted alone, and then joined the doctor in the sick room. Ishmael was awake, but pale, languid and suffering. The doctor was seated by him. He had just finished dressing his wounds, and had ordered some light nourishment, which old Katie had left the room to bring.

"How is your patient getting along, doctor?" inquired the judge.

"Oh, he is doing very well—very well, indeed," replied the doctor, putting the best face on a bad affair, after the manner of his class.

"How do you feel, my lad?" inquired the judge, bending over the patient.

"In some pain; but no more than I can very well bear, thank you, sir," said Ishmael, courteously. But his white and quivering lip betrayed the extremity of his suffering, and the difficulty he experienced in speaking at all.

"I must beg, sir, that you will not talk to him; he must be left in perfect quietness," whispered the doctor.

At this moment old Katie returned with a little light jelly on a plate. The doctor slowly administered a few teaspoonfuls to his patient, and then returned the plate to the nurse.

"Miss Claudia ordered me to call her as soon as the young man woke; and now as his wound is dressed, and he has had somethin' to eat, I might's well go call her," suggested Katie.

At the hearing of Claudia's name, Ishmael's eyes flew open, and a hectic spot blazed upon his pale cheek. The doctor, who had his eye upon his patient, noticed this, as he replied to Katie:

"Upon no account! Neither Miss Merlin, nor any one else, must be permitted to enter his room for days to come—not until I give leave. You will see this obeyed, judge?" he inquired, turning to his host.

"Assuredly," replied the latter.

At these words the color faded from Ishmael's face and the light from his eyes.

The doctor arose and took leave.

The judge attended him to the door, saw him depart, and was in the act of turning into his own house, when he perceived Reuben Gray approaching.

Judge Merlin paused to wait for his overseer. Reuben Gray came up, took off his hat, and stood before his employer, with the most comical blending of emotions on his weather-beaten countenance, where joy, grief, satisfaction and anxiety seemed to strive for the mastery.

"Well, Gray! what is it?" inquired the judge.

"Please, sir, how is Ishmael?" entreated Reuben, anxiety getting the upper hand for the moment.

"He is badly hurt, Gray; but doing very well, the doctor says."

"Please, sir, can I see him?"

"Not upon any account for the present; he must be left in perfect quiet. But why haven't you been up to inquire after him before this?"

"Ah, sir, the state of my wife."

"Oh, yes, I heard she was ill; but did not know that she was so ill as to prevent your coming to see after your poor boy. I hope she is better now?"

"Yes, sir, thank Heaven, she is well over it!" said Reuben, satisfaction now expressed in every lineament of his honest face.

"What was the matter with her? Was it the cholera morbus, that is so prevalent at this season?"

Reuben grinned from ear to ear; but did not immediately reply.

The judge looked as if he still expected an answer. Reuben scratched his gray head, and looked up from the corner of his eye, as he at length replied:

"It was a boy and a gall, sir!"

"A what?" questioned the judge, in perplexity.

"A boy and a gall, sir; twins, sir, they is," replied Reuben Gray, joy getting the mastery over every other expression in his beaming countenance.

"Why—you don't mean to tell me that your wife has presented you with twins?" exclaimed the judge, both surprised and amused at the announcement.

"Well, yes, sir," said Reuben, proudly.

"But—you are such an elderly couple!" laughed the judge.

"Well, yes, sir, so we is! And that, I take it, is the very reason on't. You see, I think, sir, because we married very late in life—poor Hannah and me—Natur' took a consideration on to it, and, as we hadn't much time before us, she

sent us two at once! at least, if that ain't the reason, I can't account for them both in any other way!" said Reuben, looking up.

"That's it! You've hit it, Reuben!" said the judge, laughing. "And mind, if they live, I'll stand godfather to the babies at the christening. Are they fine healthy children?"

"As bouncing babies, sir, as ever you set eyes on!" answered Reuben, triumphantly.

"Count on me, then, Gray."

"Thank you, sir! And, your honor——"

"Well, Gray?"

"Soon as ever Ishmael is able to hear the news, tell him, will you, please? I think it will set him up, and help him on toward his recovery."

"I think so, too," said the judge.

Reuben touched his hat and withdrew. And the judge returned to the house.

Claudia had come down and breakfasted, but was in a state of great annoyance because she was denied admittance to the bedside of her suffering favorite.

The judge, to divert her thoughts, told her of the bountiful present Nature had made to Hannah and Reuben Gray. At which Miss Claudia was so pleased that she got up and went to hunt through all her finery for presents for the children.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ALMOST any other youth than Ishmael Worth would have died of such injuries as he had sustained. But owing to that indestructible vitality and irrepressible elasticity of organization, which had carried him safely through the deadly perils of his miserable infancy, he survived.

About the fourth day of his illness, the irritative fever of his wounds having been subdued, Judge Merlin was admitted to see and converse with him.

Up to this morning, the judge had thought of the victim only as the overseer's nephew, a poor, laboring youth about the estate, who had got hurt in doing his duty and stopping Miss Merlin's runaway horses; and he supposed that he, Judge Merlin, had done his part in simply taking the suffering youth into his own house, and having him properly attended to. And now the judge went to the patient with the intention of praising his courage and offering him some proper reward for his service—as, for instance, a permanent situation to work on the estate for good wages.

And so Judge Merlin entered the sick chamber, which was

no longer darkened, but had all the windows open to admit the light and air.

He took a chair and seated himself by the bedside of the patient, and for the first time took a good look at him.

Ishmael's handsome face, no longer distorted by suffering, was calm and clear; his eyes were closed in repose but not in sleep, for the moment the judge "hemmed" he raised his eyelids and greeted his host with a gentle smile and nod.

Judge Merlin could not but be struck with the delicacy, refinement and intellectuality of Ishmael's countenance.

"How do you feel yourself this morning, my lad?" he inquired, putting the usual commonplace question.

"Much easier; thank you, sir," replied the youth, in the pure, sweet, modulated tones of a highly cultivated nature.

The judge was surprised, but did not show that he was so, as he said:

"You have done my daughter a great service; but at the cost of much suffering to yourself, I fear, my lad."

"I consider myself very fortunate and happy, sir, in having had the privilege of rendering Miss Merlin any service, at whatever cost to myself," replied Ishmael, with graceful courtesy.

More and more astonished at the words and manner of the young workman, the judge continued:

"Thank you, young man; very properly spoken—very properly; but for all that I must find some way of rewarding you."

"Sir," said Ishmael, with gentle dignity, "I must beg you will not speak to me of reward for a simple act of instinctive gallantry that any man, worthy of the name, would have performed."

"But with you, young man, the case was different," said the judge, loftily.

"True, sir," replied our youth, with a sweet and courteous dignity, "with me the case was very different; because, with me, it was a matter of self-interest; for the service rendered to Miss Merlin was rendered to myself."

"I do not understand you, young man," said the judge, haughtily.

"Pardon me, sir;—I mean that in saving Miss Merlin from injury I saved myself from despair. If any harm had befallen her I should have been miserable; so you perceive, sir, that the act you are good enough to term a great service, was too natural and too selfish to be praised or rewarded; and so I must beseech you to speak of it in that relation no more."

"But what was my daughter to you that you should risk your life for her, more than for another? or, that her maimed limbs or broken neck should affect you more than others?"

"Sir, we were old acquaintances; I saw her every day when

I went to Mr. Middleton's, and she was ever exceedingly kind to me," replied Ishmael.

"Oh! and you lived in that neighborhood?" inquired Judge Merlin, who immediately jumped to the conclusion that Ishmael had been employed as a laborer on Mr. Middleton's estate; though still he could not possibly account for the refinement of Ishmael's manner nor the excellence of his language.

"I lived in that neighborhood with my Aunt Hannah, until Uncle Reuben married her, when I accompanied them to this place," answered Ishmael.

"Ah! and you saw a great deal of Mr. Middleton and—and his family?"

"I saw them every day, sir; they were very, very kind to me."

"Every day! then you must have been employed about the house," said the judge.

An arch smile beamed in the eyes of Ishmael as he answered:

"Yes, sir, I was employed about the house—that is to say, in the schoolroom."

"Ah! to sweep it out and keep it in order, I suppose; and, doubtless, there was where you contracted your superior tone of manners and conversation," thought the judge to himself, but he replied aloud:

"Well, young man, we will say no more of rewards, since the word is distasteful to you; but as soon as you get strong again, I should be pleased to give you work about the place at fair wages. Our miller wants a white boy to go around with the grist. Would you like the place?"

"I thank you, sir, no; my plans for the future are fixed; that is, as nearly fixed as those of short-sighted mortals can be," smiled Ishmael.

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed the judge, raising his eyebrows, "and may I, as one interested in your welfare, inquire what those plans may be?"

"Certainly, sir, and I thank you very much for the interest you express, as well as for all your kindness to me." Ishmael paused for a moment and then added:

"On the first of September I shall open the Rushy Shore schoolhouse, for the reception of day pupils."

"Whe-ew!" said the judge, with a low whistle, "and do you really mean to be a schoolmaster?"

"For the present, sir, until a better one can be found to fill the place; then, indeed, I shall feel bound in honor and conscience to resign my post, for I do not believe teaching to be my true vocation."

"No! I should think not, indeed!" replied Judge Merlin, who of course supposed the overseer's nephew, notwithstanding the grace and courtesy of his speech and manner, to be fit for

nothing but manual labor. "What ever induces you to try school-keeping?" he inquired.

"I am driven to it by my own necessities, and drawn to it by the necessities of others. In other words, I needed employment, and the neighborhood needed a teacher—and I think, sir, that one who conscientiously does his best, is better than none at all. Those are the reasons, sir, why I have taken the school, with the intention of keeping it until a person more competent than myself to discharge its duties shall be found; then I shall give it up; for, as I said before, teaching is not my ultimate vocation."

"What is your 'ultimate vocation,' young man? for I should like to help you to it," said the judge, still thinking only of manual labor in all its varieties—"what is it?"

"Jurisprudence," answered Ishmael.

"Juris—WHAT?" demanded the judge, as if he had not heard aright.

"Jurisprudence—the science of human justice; the knowledge of the laws, customs, and rights of man in communities; the study above all others most necessary to the due administration of justice in human affairs, and even in divine, and second only to that of theology," replied Ishmael, with grave enthusiasm.

"But—you don't mean to say that you intend to become a lawyer?" exclaimed the judge, in a state of astonishment that bordered on consternation.

"Yes, sir; I intend to be a lawyer, if it please the Lord to bless my earnest efforts," replied the youth, reverently.

"Why—I am a lawyer!" exclaimed the judge.

"I am aware that you are a very distinguished one, sir, having risen to the bench of the Supreme Court of your native State," replied the youth, respectfully.

The judge remained in a sort of panic of astonishment. The thought in his mind was this: What—*you?* *you*, the nephew of my overseer, have *you* the astounding impudence, the madness, to think that *you* can enter a profession of which *I* am a member?

Ishmael saw that thought reflected in his countenance and smiled to himself.

"But—how do you propose ever to become a lawyer?" inquired the judge, aloud.

"By reading law," answered Ishmael, simply.

"What! upon your own responsibility?"

"Upon my own responsibility for a while. I shall try afterwards to enter the office of some lawyer. I shall use every faculty, try every means and improve every opportunity that Heaven grants me for this end. And thus I hope to succeed," said Ishmael, gravely.

"Are you aware," inquired the judge, with a little sarcasm in his tone, "that some knowledge of the classics is absolutely necessary to the success of a lawyer?"

"I am aware that a knowledge of the classics is very desirable in each and all of what are termed the 'learned professions'; but I did not know and I do not think that it can be absolutely necessary in every grade of each of these; but if so, it is well for me that I have a fair knowledge of Latin and Greek," replied Ishmael.

"What did you say?" inquired the judge, with ever-increasing wonder.

Ishmael blushed at the perception that while he only meant to state a fact, he might be suspected of making a boast.

"Did you say that you knew anything of Latin and Greek?" inquired the judge, in amazement.

"Something of both, sir," replied Ishmael, modestly.

"But surely you never picked up a smattering of the classics while sweeping out Middleton's family schoolroom!"

"Oh, no, sir!" laughed Ishmael.

"Where then?"

Ishmael's reply was lost in the bustling entrance of Dr. Jarvis, whom Judge Merlin rose to receive.

The doctor examined the condition of his patient, found him with an accession of fever, prescribed complete repose for the remainder of the day, left some medicine with directions for its administration, and departed. The judge accompanied the doctor to the door.

"That is a rather remarkable boy," observed Judge Merlin, as they went out together.

"A *very* remarkable one! Who is he?" asked Dr. Jarvis.

"The nephew of my overseer, Reuben Gray. That is absolutely all I know about it."

"The nephew of Gray? Can it be so? Why, Gray is but an ignorant boor, while this youth has the manners and education of a gentleman—a polished gentleman!" exclaimed the doctor, in astonishment.

"It is true, and I can make nothing of it," said Judge Merlin, shaking his head.

"How *very* strange!" mused the doctor, as he mounted his horse, bowed and rode away.

CHAPTER XLIV.

JUDGE MERLIN went into his well-ordered library, rang the bell and sent a servant to call his daughter.

The messenger found Claudia walking impatiently up and down the drawing-room floor and turning herself at each wall

with an angry jerk. Claudia had not yet been admitted to see Ishmael. She had just been refused again by old Katie, who acted upon the doctor's authority, and Claudia was unreasonably furious with everybody.

Claudia instantly obeyed the summons. She entered the library with hasty steps, closed the door with a bang, and stood before her father with flushed cheeks, sparkling eyes and heaving bosom.

"Hey, dey! what's the matter?" asked the judge, taking his pipe from his mouth and staring at his daughter.

"You sent for me, papa! I hope it is to take me in to see that poor, half-crushed boy! What does old Katie mean by forever denying me entrance? It is not every day that a poor lad risks his life and gets himself crushed nearly to death in my service, that I should be made to appear to neglect him in this way! What must the boy think of me? What does old Katie mean, I ask?"

"If your nature requires a vehement expression, of course I am not the one to repress it! Still, in my opinion, vehemence is unworthy of a rational being, at all times, and especially when, as now, there is not the slightest occasion for it. You have not willfully neglected the young man; it is not of the least consequence whether he thinks you have, or not; and, finally, Katie means to obey the doctor's orders, which are to keep every living soul out of the sick room to secure the patient needful repose. I believe I have answered you, Miss Merlin," replied the judge, smiling and coolly replacing his pipe in his mouth.

"Papa, what a disagreeable wet blanket you are, to be sure!"

"It is my nature to be so, my dear; and I am just what you need to dampen the fire of your temperament."

"Are those the orders of the doctor?"

"What, wet blankets for you?"

"No; but that everybody must be excluded from Ishmael's room?"

"Yes; his most peremptory orders, including even me for the present."

"Then I suppose they must be submitted to?"

"For the present, certainly."

Claudia shrugged her shoulders with an impatient gesture, and then said:

"You sent for me, papa. Was it for anything particular?"

"Yes; to question you. Have you been long acquainted with this Ishmael Gray?"

"Ishmael Worth, papa! Yes, I have known him well ever since you placed me with my Aunt Middleton," replied Claudia, throwing herself into a chair.

The judge was slowly walking up and down the library, and he continued his walk as he conversed with his daughter.

"Who is this Ishmael Worth, then?"

"You know, papa; the nephew of Reuben Gray, or rather of his wife; but it is the same thing."

"I know he is the nephew of Gray; but that explains nothing! Gray is a rude, ignorant, though well-meaning boor; but this lad is a refined, graceful and cultivated young man."

Claudia made no comment upon this.

"Now, if you have known him so many years, you ought to be able to explain this inconsistency. One does not expect to find nightingales in crows' nests," said the judge.

Still Miss Merlin was silent.

"Why don't you speak, my dear?"

Claudia blushed over her face, neck and bosom as she answered:

"Papa, what shall I say? You force me to remember things I would like to forget. Socially, Ishmael Worth was born the lowest of all the low. Naturally, he was endowed with the highest moral and intellectual gifts. He is in a great measure self-educated. In worldly position he is beneath our feet; in wisdom and goodness he is far, far above our heads. He is one of nature's princes, but one of society's outcasts."

"But how has the youth contrived to procure the means of such education as he has?" inquired the judge, seating himself opposite his daughter.

"Papa, I will tell you all I know about him," replied Claudia. And she commenced and related the history of Ishmael's struggles, trials and triumphs, from the hour of her first meeting with him in front of Hamlin's book shop to that of his self-immolation to save her from death. Claudia spoke with deep feeling. As she concluded her bosom was heaving, her cheeks were flushed and her eyes tearful with emotion.

"And now, papa," she said, as she finished her narrative, "you will understand why it is that I cannot, *must* not, will not neglect him! As soon as he can bear visitors I must be admitted to his room, to do for him all that a young sister might do for her brother; no one could reasonably cavil at that. Papa, Ishmael believes in me more than any one else in the world does. He thinks more highly of me than others do. He knows that there is something better in me than this mere outside beauty that others praise so foolishly. And I would not like to lose his good opinion, papa. I could not bear to have him think me cold, selfish, or ungrateful. So I must and I will help to nurse him."

"Miss Merlin, you have grown up very much as my trees have, with every natural eccentricity of growth untrimmed;

but I hope you will not let your graceful branches trail upon the earth."

"What do you mean, papa?"

"I hope you do not mean to play Catherine to this boy's Huon in a new version of the drama of 'Love; or, The Countess and the Serf!'"

"Papa! how *can* you say such things to your motherless daughter! You know that I would die first!" exclaimed the imperious girl, indignantly, as she bounced up and flung herself into a passion and out of the room. She left the door wide open; but had scarcely disappeared before her place in the doorway was filled up by the tall, gaunt figure, gray head and smiling face of Reuben.

"Well, Gray?"

"Well, sir, I have brought the farm books all made up to the first of this month, sir," said the overseer, laying the volumes on the table before his master.

"And very neatly and accurately done, too," remarked the judge, as he turned over the pages and examined the items.

"It is not your handwriting, Gray?"

"Dear, no, sir! not likely!"

"Nor little Kitty's?"

"Why, law, sir! little Kitty has been in Californy a year or more! How did you like the 'rangement of your liber-airy, sir?" inquired Gray, with apparent irrelevance, as he glanced around upon the book-lined walls.

"Very much, indeed, Gray! I never had my books so well classified. It was the work of young Ramsay, the school-master, I suppose, and furnished him with employment during the midsummer holidays. You must tell him that I am very much pleased with the work and that he must send in his account immediately."

"Law bless you, sir; it was not Master Ramsay as did it," said Gray, with a broad grin.

"Who, then? Whoever it was, it is all the same to me, I am pleased with the work, and willing to testify my approval by a liberal payment."

"It was the same hand, sir, as made out the farm books."

"And who was that?"

"It was my nephew, Ishmael Worth, sir," replied Reuben, with a little pardonable pride.

"Ishmael Worth again!" exclaimed the judge.

"Yes, sir; he done 'em both."

"That is an intelligent lad of yours, Gray."

"Well, sir, he is just a wonder."

"How do you account for his being so different from—
from—"

"From me and Hannah?" inquired simple Reuben, helping

the judge out of his difficulty. "Well, sir, I s'pose as how his natur' were diff'ent, and so he growed up diff'ent accordin' to his natur'. Human creeters differ like vegetables, sir; some one sort and some another. Me and Hannah, sir, we's like plain 'tatoes; but Ishmael, sir, is like a rich, bright, blooming peach! That's the onliest way as I can explain it, sir."

"A very satisfactory explanation, Gray! How are Hannah and those wonderful twins?"

"Fine, sir; fine, thank Heaven! Miss Claudia was so good as to send word as how she would come to see Hannah as soon as she was able to see company. Now Hannah is able to-day, sir, and would be proud to see Miss Claudia and to show her the babbies."

"Very well, Gray! I will let my daughter know," said the judge, rising from his chair.

Reuben took this as a hint that his departure was desirable, and so he made his bow and his exit.

In another moment, however, he reappeared, holding his hat in his hand and saying:

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"Well, what now? what is it, Gray? What's forgotten?"

"If you please, sir, to give my duty to Miss Claudia and beg her not to let poor Hannah know as Ishmael has been so badly hurt. When she missed him we told her how he was staying up here long of your honor, and she naterally thinks how he is a-doing of some more liber-airy work for you; and we dar'n't tell her any better or how the truth is, for fear of heaving her back, sir."

"Very well; I will caution Miss Merlin."

"And I hope, sir, as you and Miss Claudia will pardon the liberty I take in mentioning of the matter; which I wouldn't go for to do it if poor Hannah's safety were not involved."

"Certainly, certainly, Gray, I can appreciate your feelings as a husband and father."

"Thank your honor," said Reuben, and once more he bowed himself out.

The judge kept his word to the overseer and the same hour conveyed to his daughter the invitation and the caution.

Claudia was moped half to death and desired nothing better than a little amusement. So the same afternoon she set out on her walk to Woodside, followed by her own maid Mattie, carrying a large basket filled with fine laces, ribbons and beads to deck the babies, and wines, cordials and jellies to nourish the mother.

On arriving at Woodside Cottage, Miss Merlin was met by Sally, the colored maid of all work, and shown immediately into a neat bedroom on the ground floor, where she found Hannah sitting in state in her resting-chair beside her bed, and

contemplating with maternal satisfaction the infant prodigies that lay in the cradle at her feet.

"Do not attempt to rise! I am so glad to see you looking so well, Mrs. Gray. I am Miss Merlin," was Claudia's frank greeting, as she approached Hannah, and held out her hand.

"Thank you, miss; you are very good to come; and I am glad to see you," said the proud mother, heartily shaking the hand offered by the visitor.

"I wish you much joy of your fine children, Mrs. Gray."

"Thank you very much, miss. Pray, sit down. Sally, hand a chair."

The maid of all work brought one, which Claudia took, saying:

"Now let me see the twins."

Hannah stooped and raised the white dimity coverlet, and proudly displayed her treasures—two fat, round, red-faced babies, calmly sleeping side by side.

What woman or girl ever looked upon sleeping infancy without pleasure? Claudia's face brightened into beaming smiles as she contemplated these children, and exclaimed:

"They are beauties! I want you to let me help to dress them up fine, Mrs. Gray! I have no little brothers and sisters, nor nephews and nieces; and I should like so much to have a part property in these!"

"You are too good, Miss Merlin."

"I am not good at all. I like to have my own way. I should like to pet and dress these babies. I declare, for the want of a little brother or sister to pet, I could find it in my heart to dress a doll! See, now, what I have brought for these babies! Let the basket down, Mattie, and take the things out."

Miss Merlin's maid obeyed, and displayed to the astonished eyes of Hannah yards of cambric, muslin and lawn rolls of lace, ribbon and beads, and lots of other finery.

Hannah's eyes sparkled. That good woman had never been covetous for herself, but for those children she could become so. She had too much surly pride to accept favors for herself, but for those children she could do so; not, however, without some becoming hesitation and reluctance.

"It is too much, Miss Merlin. All these articles are much too costly for me to accept, or for the children to wear," she began.

But Claudia silenced her with—

"Nonsense! I know very well that you do not in your heart think that there is anything on earth too fine for those babies to wear! And as for their being costly, that is my business. Mattie, lay all these things on Mrs. Gray's bureau."

Again Mattie obeyed her mistress, and then set the empty basket down on the floor.

"Now, Mattie, the other basket."

Mattie brought it.

"Mrs. Gray, these wines, cordials and jellies are all of domestic manufacture—Katie's own make; and she declares them to be the best possible supports for invalids in your condition," said Miss Merlin, uncovering the second basket.

"But really and indeed, miss, you are too kind. I cannot think of accepting all these good things from you."

"Mattie, arrange all those pots, jars and bottles on the mantel shelf, until somebody comes to take them away," said Claudia, without paying the least attention to Hannah's remonstrances.

When this order was also obeyed, and Mattie stood with both empty baskets on her arms, waiting further instructions, Miss Merlin arose, saying:

"And now, Mrs. Gray, I must bid you good afternoon, I cannot keep papa waiting dinner for me. But I will come to see you again to-morrow, if you will allow me to do so."

"Miss Merlin, I should be proud and happy to see you as often as you think fit to come."

"And, mind, I am to stand godmother to the twins."

"Certainly, miss, if you please to do so."

"By the way, what is to be their names?"

"John and Mary, miss—after Reuben's father and my mother."

"Very well; I will be spiritually responsible for John and Mary! Good-by, Mrs. Gray."

"Good-by, and thank you, Miss Merlin."

Claudia shook hands and departed. She had scarcely got beyond the threshold of the chamber door, when she heard the voice of Hannah calling her back:

"Miss Merlin!"

Claudia returned.

"I beg your pardon, miss; but I hear my nephew, Ishmael Worth, is up at the house, doing something for the judge."

"He is up there," answered Claudia, evasively.

"Well, do pray tell him, my dear Miss Merlin, if you please, that I want to see him as soon as he can possibly get home. Oh! I beg your pardon a thousand times for taking the liberty of asking you, miss."

"I will tell him," said Claudia, smiling and retiring.

When Miss Merlin had gone, Hannah stooped and contemplated her own two children with a mother's insatiable pride and love. Suddenly she burst into penitential tears and wept.

Why?

She was gazing upon her own two fine, healthful, handsome babies, that were so much admired, so well beloved, and so tenderly cared for; and she was remembering little Ishmael in his

poor orphaned infancy—so pale, thin and sickly, so disliked, avoided and neglected! At this remembrance her penitent heart melted in remorseful tenderness. The advent of her own children had shown to Hannah by retrospective action all the cruelty and hardness of heart she had once felt and shown toward Ishmael.

“But I will make it all up to him—poor, dear boy! I will make it all up to him in the future! Oh, how hard my heart was toward him! as if he could have helped being born, poor fellow! How badly I treated him! Suppose now, as a punishment for my sin, *I* was to die and leave *my* children to be despised and neglected, and wished dead by them as had the care of ‘em! How would I feel? although my children are so much healthier and stronger, and better able to bear neglect than ever Ishmael was, poor, poor fellow! It is a wonder he ever lived through it all. Surely, only God sustained him, for he was bereft of nearly all human help. Oh, Nora! Nora! I never did my duty to your boy; but I will do it now, if God will only forgive and spare me for the work!” concluded Hannah, as she raised both of her own children to her lap.

Meanwhile, attended by her maid, Miss Merlin went on her way homeward. She reached Tanglewood in time for dinner, at six o’clock.

At table the judge said to her:

“Well, Claudia! the doctor has been here on his evening visit, and he says that you may see our young patient in the morning, after he has had his breakfast; but that no visitor must be admitted to his chamber at any later hour of the day.”

“Very well, papa, I hope you will give old Katie to understand that, so that she may not give me any trouble when I apply at the door,” smiled Claudia.

“Katie understands it all, my dear,” said the judge.

And so it was arranged that Claudia should visit her young preserver on the following morning.

CHAPTER XLV.

It was as yet early morning; but the day promised to be sultry, and all the windows of Ishmael’s chamber were open to facilitate the freest passage of air. Ishmael lay motionless upon his cool, white bed, letting his glances wander abroad, whither his broken limbs could no longer carry him.

His room, being a corner one, rejoiced in four large windows, two looking east and two north. Close up to these windows grew the clustering woods. Amid their branches, even the wildest birds built nests, and their strange songs mingled

with the rustle of the golden green leaves as they glimmered in the morning sun and breeze.

It was a singular combination, that comfortable room abounding in all the elegancies of the highest civilization, and that untrodden wilderness in which the whip-poor-will cried and the wild eagle screamed.

And Ishmael, as he looked through the dainty white-draped windows into the tremulous shadows of the wood, understood how the descendant of Powhatan, weary of endless brick walls, dusty streets, and crowded thoroughfares, should, as soon as he was free from official duties, fly to the opposite extreme of all these—to his lodge in this unbroken forest, where scarcely a woodman's ax had sounded, where scarcely a human foot had fallen. He sympathized with the "monomania" of Randolph Merlin in not permitting a thicket to be thinned out, a road to be opened, or a tree to be trimmed on his wild woodland estate; so that here at least, Nature should have her own way, with no hint of the world's labor and struggle to disturb her vital repose.

As these reveries floated through the clear, active brain of the invalid youth, the door of his chamber softly opened.

Why did Ishmael's heart bound in his bosom, and every pulse throb?

She stood within the open doorway! How lovely she looked, with her soft, white muslin morning dress floating freely around her graceful form, and her glittering jet black ringlets shading her snowy forehead, shadowy eyes and damask cheeks!

She closed the door as softly as she had opened it and advanced into the room.

Old Katie arose from some obscure corner and placed a chair for her near the head of Ishmael's bed on his right side.

Claudia sank gently into this seat and turned her face toward Ishmael, and attempted to speak; but a sudden, hysterical rising in her throat, choked her voice.

Her eyes had taken in all at a glance!—the splintered leg, the bandaged arm, the plastered chest, the ashen complexion, the sunken cheeks and the hollow eyes of the poor youth;—and utterance failed her!

But Ishmael gently and respectfully pressed the hand she had given him, and smiled as he said:

"It is very kind of you to come and see me, Miss Merlin. I thank you earnestly." For, however strong Ishmael's emotions might have been, he possessed the self-controlling power of an exalted nature.

"Oh, Ishmael!" was all that Claudia found ability to say; her voice was choked, her bosom heaving, her face pallid.

"Pray, pray do not disturb yourself, Miss Merlin; indeed I

am doing very well," said the youth, smiling. The next instant he turned away his face; it was to conceal a spasm of agony that suddenly sharpened all his features, blanched his lips and forced the cold sweat out upon his brow. But Claudia had seen it all.

"Oh, I fear you suffer very much," she said.

The spasm had passed as quickly as it came. He turned to her his smiling eyes.

"I fear you suffer very, very much," she repeated, looking at him.

"Oh, no, not much; see how soon the pain passed away."

"Ah! but it was so severe while it lasted! I saw that it caught your breath away! I saw it, though you tried to hide it! Ah! you *do* suffer, Ishmael! and for me! *me!* she cried, forgetting her pride in the excess of her sympathy.

The smile in Ishmael's dark blue eyes deepened to ineffable tenderness and beauty, as he answered softly:

"It is very, very sweet to suffer for—one we esteem and honor."

"I am not worth an hour of your pain!" exclaimed Claudia, with something very like self-reproach.

"Oh, Miss Merlin, if you knew how little I should value my life in comparison with your safety." Ishmael paused; for he felt that perhaps he was going too far.

"I think that you have well proved how ready you are to sacrifice your life for the preservation, not only of your friends, but of your very foes! I have not forgotten your rescue of Alf and Ben Burghe," said the heiress, emphatically; yet a little coldly, as if, while she was anxious to give him the fullest credit and the greatest honor for courage, generosity and magnanimity, she was desirous to disclaim any personal interest he might feel for herself.

"There is a difference, Miss Merlin," said Ishmael, with gentle dignity.

"Oh, I suppose there is; one would rather risk one's life for a friend than for an enemy," replied Claudia, icily.

"I have displeased you, Miss Merlin; I am very sorry for it. Pray, forgive me," said Ishmael, with a certain suave and stately courtesy, for which the youth was beginning to be noted.

"Oh, you have not displeased me, Ishmael! How could you, you who have just risked and almost sacrificed your life to save mine! No, you have not displeased; but you have surprised me! I would not have had you run any risk for *me*, Ishmael, that you would not have run for the humblest negro on my father's plantation; that is all."

"Miss Merlin, I would have run any risk to save any one at need; but I might not have borne the after consequences in all

cases with equal patience—equal *pleasure*. Ah, Miss Merlin, forgive me, if I am now happy in my pain! forgive me this presumption, for it is the only question at issue between us," said the youth, with a pleading glance.

"Oh, Ishmael, let us not talk any more about *me*! Talk of yourself. Tell me how you are, and where you feel pain."

"Nowhere much, Miss Merlin."

"Papa told me that two of your limbs were broken and *your* chest injured, and now I see all that for myself."

"My injuries are doing very well. My broken bones are knitting together again as fast as they possibly can, my physician says."

"But that is a very painful process, I fear," said Claudia, compassionately.

"Indeed, no; I do not find it so."

"Ah! your face shows what you endure. Is it your chest, then, that hurts you?"

"My chest is healing very rapidly. Do not distress your kind heart, Miss Merlin; indeed, I am doing very well."

"You are very patient, and therefore you will do well, if you are not doing so now. Ishmael, now that I am permitted to visit you, I shall come every day. But they have limited me to fifteen minutes' stay this morning, and my time is up. Good morning, Ishmael."

"Good morning, Miss Merlin. May the Lord bless you," said Ishmael, respectfully pressing the hand she gave him.

"I will come again to-morrow; and then if you continue to grow better, I may be allowed to remain with you for half an hour," she said, rising.

"Thank you, Miss Merlin; I shall try to grow better; you have given me a great incentive to improvement."

Claudia's face grew grave again. She bowed coldly and left the room.

As soon as the door had closed behind her, Ishmael's long-strained nerves became relaxed, and his countenance changed again in one of those awful spasms of pain to which he was now so subject. The paroxysm, kept off by force of will, for Claudia's sake, during her stay, now took its revenge by holding the victim longer in its grasp. A minute or two of mortal agony and then it was past, and the patient was relieved.

"I don't know what *you* call pain; but if dis 'ere ain't pain, I don't want to see no worser de longest day as ever I live!" exclaimed Katie, who stood by the bedside wiping the deathly dew from the icy brow of the sufferer.

"But you see—it lasts so short a time—it is already gone," gasped Ishmael, faintly. "It is no sooner come than gone," he added, with a smile.

"And no sooner gone, nor come again! And a-most taking

of your life when it do come!" said Katie, placing a cordial to the ashen lips of the sufferer.

The stimulant revived his strength, brought color to his cheeks and light to his eyes.

Ishmael's next visitor was Reuben Gray, who was admitted to see him for a few minutes only. This was Reuben's first visit to the invalid, and as under the transient influence of the stimulant Ishmael looked brighter than usual, Reuben thought that he must be getting on remarkably well, and congratulated him accordingly.

Ishmael smilingly returned the compliment by wishing Gray joy of his son and daughter.

Reuben grinned with delight and expatiated on their beauty, until it was time for him to take leave.

"Your Aunt Hannah don't know as you've been hurt, my boy; we dar'n't tell her, for fear of the consequences. But now as you really do seem to be getting on so well and as she is getting strong so fast, and continerally asking arter you, I think I will just go and tell her all about it, and as how there is no cause to be alarmed no more," said Reuben, as he stood, hat in hand, by Ishmael's bed.

"Yes, do, Uncle Reuben, else she will think I neglect her," pleaded Ishmael.

Reuben promised, and then took his departure.

That was the last visit Ishmael received that day.

Reuben kept his word, and as soon as he got home he gradually broke to Hannah the news of Ishmael's accident, softening the matter as much as possible, softening it out of all truth, for when the anxious woman insisted on knowing exactly the extent of her nephew's injuries, poor Reuben, alarmed for the effect upon his wife's health, boldly affirmed that there was nothing worse in Ishmael's case than a badly sprained ankle, that confined him to the house! And it was weeks longer before Hannah heard the truth of the affair.

The next day Claudia Merlin repeated her visit to Ishmael, and remained with him for half an hour.

And from that time she visited his room daily, increasing each day the length of her stay.

Ishmael's convalescence was very protracted. The severe injuries that must have caused the death of any less highly vitalized human creature really confined Ishmael for weeks to his bed and for months to the house. It was four weeks before he could leave his bed for a sofa. And it was about that time that Hannah got out again; and incredulous, anxious and angry all at once, walked up to Tanglewood to find out for herself whether it was a "sprained ankle" only that kept her nephew confined there.

Mrs. Gray was shown at once to the convalescent's room,

where Ishmael, whose very breath was pure truth, being asked, told her all about his injuries.

Poor Hannah wept tears of retrospective pity; but did not in her inmost heart blame Gray for the "pious fraud" he had practiced with the view of saving her own feelings at a critical time. She would have had Ishmael conveyed immediately to Woodside, that she might nurse him herself; but neither the doctor, the judge, nor the heiress would consent to his removal; and so Hannah had to submit to their will and leave her nephew where he was. But she consoled herself by walking over every afternoon to see Ishmael.

Claudia usually spent several hours of the forenoon in Ishmael's company. He was still very weak, pale and thin. His arm was in a sling, and as it was his right arm, as well as his right leg that had been broken, he could not use a crutch; so that he was confined all day to the sofa or the easy chair, in which his nurse would place him in the morning.

Claudia devoted herself to his amusement with all a sister's care. She read to him; sung to him, accompanying her song with the guitar; and she played chess, Ishmael using his left hand to move the pieces.

Claudia knew that this gifted boy worshiped her with a passionate love, that was growing deeper, stronger and more ardent every day. She knew that probably his peace of mind would be utterly wrecked by this fatal passion. She knew all this, and yet she would not withdraw herself, either suddenly or gradually. The adoration of this young, pure, exalted soul was an intoxicating incense that had become a daily habit and necessity to the heiress. But she tacitly required it to be a *silent* offering. So long as her lover worshiped her only with his eyes, tones and manners, she was satisfied, gracious and cordial; but the instant he was betrayed into any words of admiration or interest in her, she grew cold and haughty, she chilled and repelled him.

And yet she did not mean to trifle with his affections or destroy his peace; but it was very dull in the country, and Claudia had nothing else to occupy and interest her mind and heart. Besides she really did appreciate and admire the wonderfully endowed peasant boy as much as she possibly could, in the case of one so immeasurably far beneath her in rank. And she really did take more pride and delight in the society of Ishmael than in that of any other human being she had ever met. And yet, had it been possible that Ishmael should have been acknowledged by his father and invested with the name, arms and estate of Brudenell, Claudia Merlin, in her present mood of mind, would have died and seen him die, before she would have given her hand to one upon whose birth a single shade of reproach was even suspected to rest.

Meanwhile Ishmael reveled in what would have been a fool's paradise to most young men in similar circumstances; but which really was not such to him; dreaming those dreams of youth, the realization of which would have been impossible to nine hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand, situated as he was; but which intellect and will made quite probable for him. With his master mind and heart he read Claudia Merlin thoroughly, and understood her better than she understood herself. In his secret soul he knew that every inch of progress made in her favor was a permanent conquest never to be yielded up. And loving her as loyally as ever knight loved lady, he let her deceive herself by thinking she was amusing herself at his expense, for he was certain of ultimate victory.

Other thoughts also occupied Ishmael. The first of September, the time for opening the Rushy Shore school had come; and the youth was still unable to walk. Under these circumstances, he wrote a note to the agent, Brown, and told him that it would be wrong to leave the school shut up while the children of the neighborhood remained untaught and requested him to seek another teacher.

It cost the youth some self-sacrifice to give up this last chance of employment; but we already know that Ishmael never hesitated a moment between duty and self-interest.

September passed. Those who have watched surgical cases in military hospitals know how long it takes a crushed and broken human body to recover the use of its members. It was late in October before Ishmael's right arm was strong enough to support the crutch that was needed to relieve the pressure upon his right leg when he attempted to walk.

It was about this time that Judge Merlin was heard often to complain of the great accumulation of correspondence upon his hands.

Ishmael, ever ready to be useful, modestly tendered his services to assist.

After a little hesitation, the judge thanked the youth and accepted his offer. And the next day Ishmael was installed in a comfortable leather chair in the library, with his crutch beside him and a writing-table covered with letters to be read and answered before him. These letters were all open, and each had a word or line penciled upon it indicating the character of the answer that was to be given. Upon some was simply written the word "No"; upon others, "Yes"; upon some, "Will think of it"; upon others, again, "Call on me when I come to town"; and so forth. All this, of course, Ishmael had to put into courteous language, using his own judgment after reading the letters.

Of course it was the least important part of his correspondence that Judge Merlin put into his young assistant's hands;

but, notwithstanding that, the trust was a very responsible one. Even Ishmael doubted whether he could discharge such unfamiliar duties with satisfaction to his employer.

He worked diligently all that day, however, and completed the task that had been laid out for him before the bell rung for the late dinner. Then he arose and respectfully called the judge's attention to the finished work, and bowed and left the room.

With something like curiosity and doubt, the judge went up to the table and opened and read three or four of the letters written for him by his young amanuensis. And, as he read, surprise and pleasure lighted up his countenance.

"The boy is a born diplomatist! I should not wonder if the world should hear of him some day, after all!" he said, as he read letter after letter that had been left unsealed for his optional perusal. In these letters he found his own hard "No's" expressed with a courtesy that softened them even to the most bitterly disappointed; his arrogant "Yes's" with a delicacy that could not wound the self-love of the most sensitive petitioner; and his intermediate, doubtful answers, rendered with a clearness of which by their very nature they seemed incapable.

"The boy is a born diplomatist," repeated the judge in an accession of astonishment.

But he was wrong in his judgment of Ishmael. If the youth's style of writing was gracious, courteous, delicate, it was because his inmost nature was pure, refined and benignant. If his letters *denying* favors soothed rather than offended the applicant, and if those *granting* favors flattered rather than humiliated the petitioner, it was because of that angelic attribute of Ishmael's soul that made it so painful to him to give pain, so delightful to impart delight. There was no thought of diplomatic dealing in all Ishmael's truthful soul.

The judge was excessively pleased with his young assistant. Judge Merlin was an excellent lawyer, but no orator, and never had been, nor could be one. He had not himself the gift of eloquence either in speaking or writing; and, therefore, perhaps he was the more astonished and pleased to find it in the possession of his letter-writer. He was pleased to have his correspondence well written, for it reflected credit upon himself.

Under the influence of his surprise and pleasure he took up his hand full of letters and went directly to Ishmael's room. He found the youth seated in his armchair by the window engaged in reading.

"What have you there?" inquired Judge Merlin.

Ishmael smiled and turned the title page to his questioner.

"Humph! 'Coke upon Lyttleton.' Lay it down, Ishmael,

and attend to me," said the judge, drawing a chair and seating himself beside the youth.

Ishmael immediately closed the book and gave the most respectful attention.

"I am very much pleased with the manner in which you have accomplished your task, Ishmael. You have done your work remarkably well! So well that I should like to give you longer employment," he said.

Ishmael's heart leaped in his bosom.

"Thank you, sir; I am very glad you are satisfied with me," he replied.

"Let us see now, this is the fifteenth of October; I shall remain here until the first of December, when we go to town; a matter of six weeks; and I shall be glad, Ishmael, during the interval of my stay here, to retain you as my assistant. What say you?"

"Indeed, sir, I shall feel honored and happy in serving you."

"I will give you what I consider a fair compensation for so very young a beginner. By the way, how old are you?"

"I shall be nineteen in December."

"Very well; I will give you twenty dollars a month and your board."

"Judge Merlin," said Ishmael, as his pale face flushed crimson, "I shall feel honored and happy in serving you; but from you I cannot consent to receive any compensation."

The judge stared at the speaker with astonishment that took all power of reply away; but Ishmael continued:

"Consider, sir, the heavy obligations under which I already rest toward you, and permit me to do what I can to lighten the load."

"What do you mean? What the deuce are you talking about?" at last asked the judge.

"Sir, I have been an inmate of your house for nearly three months, nursed, tended and cared for as if I had been a son of the family. What can I render you for all these benefits? Sir, my gratitude and services are due to you, are your own. Pray, therefore, do not mention compensation to me again," replied the youth.

"Young man, you surprise me beyond measure. Your gratitude and services due to me? For what, pray? For taking care of you when you were so dangerously injured in my service? Did you not receive all your injuries in saving my daughter from a violent death? After that, who should have taken care of you but me? 'Taken care of you?' I should take care of all your future! I should give you a fortune, or a profession, or some other substantial and permanent compensation for your great service, to clear accounts between us!" exclaimed the judge.

Ishmael bowed his head. Oh, bitterest of all bitter mortifications! To hear her father speak to *him* of reward for saving Claudia's life! To think how every one was so far from knowing that in saving Claudia he had saved himself! He had a *right* to risk his life for Claudia, and no one, not even her father, had a right to insult him by speaking of reward! Claudia was his own; Ishmael knew it, though no one on earth, not even the heiress herself, suspected it.

The judge watched the youth as he sat with his fine young forehead bowed thoughtfully upon his hand; and Judge Merlin understood Ishmael's reluctance to receive pay; but did not understand the cause of it.

"Come, my boy," he said; "you are young and inexperienced. You cannot know much of life. I am an old man of the world, capable of advising you. You should follow my advice."

"Indeed, I will gratefully do so, sir," said Ishmael, raising his head, glad, amid all his humiliation, to be advised by Claudia's father.

"Then, my boy, you must reflect that it would be very improper for *me* to avail myself of your really valuable assistance without giving you a reasonable compensation; and that, in short, I could not do it," said the judge, firmly.

"Do you regard the question in that light, sir?" inquired Ishmael, doubtfully.

"Most assuredly. It is the only true light in which to regard it."

"Then I have no option but to accept your own terms, sir. I will serve you gladly and gratefully, to the best of my ability," concluded the youth.

And the affair was settled to their mutual satisfaction.

CHAPTER XLVI.

WHEN the judge met his daughter at dinner that evening, he informed her of the new arrangement effected with Ishmael Worth.

Miss Merlin listened in some surprise, and then asked:

"Was it well done, papa?"

"What, Claudia?"

"The making of that engagement with Ishmael."

"I think so, my dear, as far as I am interested, at least, and I shall endeavor to make the arrangement profitable also to the youth."

"And he is to remain with us until we go to town?"

"Yes, my dear; but you seem to demur, Claudia. Now what

is the matter? What possible objection can there be to Ishmael Worth remaining here as my assistant until we go to town?"

"Papa, it will be accustoming him to a society and style that will make it very hard for him to return to the company of the ignorant men and women who have hitherto been his associates," said Claudia.

"But why should he return to them? Young Worth is very talented and well educated. He works to enable him to study a profession. There is no reason on earth why he should not succeed. He looks like a gentleman, talks like a gentleman, and behaves like a gentleman! And there is nothing to prevent his becoming a gentleman."

"Oh, yes, there is, papa! Yes, there is!" exclaimed Claudia, with emotion.

"To what do you allude, my dear?"

"To his—low birth, papa!" exclaimed Claudia, with a gasp.

"His low birth? Claudia! do we live in a Republic or not? If we do, what is the use of our free institutions if a deserving young man is to be despised on account of his birth? Claudia! in the circle of my acquaintance there are at least half a dozen prosperous men who were the sons of poor but respectable parents."

"Yes! poor, but—*respectable!*!" ejaculated Claudia, with exceeding bitterness.

"My daughter! what do you mean by that? Surely young Worth's family are honest people?" inquired the judge, in surprise.

"Ishmael's parents were *not* respectable! his mother was never married! I heard this years ago, but did not believe it. I heard it confirmed to-day!" cried Claudia, with a gasp and a sob, as she sank back in her chair and covered her burning face with her hands.

The judge laid down his knife and fork and gazed at his daughter, muttering:

"That is unfortunate! very unfortunate! no, he will never get over that reproach; so far, you are right, Claudia."

"Oh, no, I am wrong! basely wrong! He saved my life, and I speak these words of him, as if he were answerable for the sins of others! as if his great misfortune was his crime! Poor Ishmael! Poor, noble-hearted boy! He saved my life, papa, at the price of deadly peril and terrible suffering to himself! Oh, reward him well, lavishly, munificently! but send him away! I cannot bear his presence here!" exclaimed the excited girl.

"Claudia, it is natural that you should be shocked at hearing such a piece of news; which, true or false, certainly ought never to have been brought to your ear. But, my dear, there is no need of all this excitement on your part. I do not under-

stand its excess. The youth is a good, intelligent, well-mannered boy, when all is said. Of course he can never attain the position of a gentleman; but that is no reason why he should be utterly cast out. And as to sending him away, now, there are several reasons why I cannot do that: In the first place, he is not able to go; in the second, I need his pen; in the third, I have made an engagement with him which I will not break. As for the rest, Claudia, you need not be troubled with the sight of him; I will take care that he does not intrude upon your presence," said the judge, as he arose from the table.

Claudia threw on her garden hat and hurried out of the house to bury herself in the shadows of the forest. That day she had learned, from the gossip of old Mrs. Jones, who was on a visit to a married daughter in the neighborhood, Ishmael's real history, or what was supposed to be his real history. She had struggled for composure all day long, and only utterly lost her self-possession in the conversation with her father at the dinner-table. Now she sought the depths of the forest, because she could not bear the sight of a human face. Her whole nature was divided and at war with itself. All that was best in Claudia Merlin's heart and mind was powerfully and constantly attracted by the moral and intellectual excellence of Ishmael Worth; but all the prejudices of her rank and education were revolted by the circumstances attending his birth, and were up in arms against the emotions of her better nature.

In what consists the power of the quiet forest shades to calm fierce human passions? I know not; but it is certain that, after walking two or three hours through their depths communing with her own spirit, Claudia Merlin returned home in a better mood to meet her father at the tea-table.

"Papa," she said, as she seated herself at the head of the table and began to make the tea, "you need not trouble yourself to keep Ishmael out of my way. Dreadful as this discovery is, he is not to blame, poor boy! And I think we had better not make any change in our treatment of him; he would be wounded by our coldness; he would not understand it and we could not explain. Besides, the six weeks will soon be over and then we shall be done with him."

"I am glad to hear you say so, my dear; especially as I had invited Ishmael to join us at tea this evening and forgotten to tell you of it until this moment. But, Claudia, my little girl," said the judge, scrutinizing her pale cheeks and heavy eyes, "you must not take all the sin and sorrows of the world as much to heart as you have this case; for, if you do, you will be an old woman before you are twenty years of age."

Claudia smiled faintly; but before she could reply, the regular, monotonous thump of a crutch was heard approaching

the door, and in another moment Ishmael stood within the room.

There was nothing in that fine intellectual countenance, with its fair, broad, calm forehead, thoughtful eyes and finely curved lips, to suggest the idea of an ignoble birth. With a graceful bow and sweet smile and a perfectly well-bred manner, Ishmael approached and took his seat at the table. The judge took his crutch and set it up in a corner, saying:

"I see you have discarded one crutch, my boy! You will be able to discard the other in a day or so."

"Yes, sir; I only retain this one in compliance with the injunctions of the doctor, who declares that I must not bear full weight upon the injured limb yet," replied Ishmael, courteously.

No one could have supposed from the manner of the youth that he had not been accustomed to mingle on equal terms in the best society.

Claudia poured out the tea. She was not deficient in courtesy; but she could not bring herself, as yet, to speak to Ishmael with her usual ease and freedom. When tea was over she excused herself and retired. Claudia was not accustomed to seek Divine help. And so, in one of the greatest straits of her moral experience, without one word of prayer, she threw herself upon her bed, where she lay tossing about, as yet too agitated with mental conflict to sleep.

Ishmael improved in health and grew in favor with his employer. He walked daily from his chamber to the library without the aid of a crutch. He took his meals with the family. And oh, ruinous extravagance, he wore his Sunday suit every day! There was no help for it, since he must sit in the judge's library and eat at the judge's table.

Claudia treated him well; with the inconsistency of girlish nature, since she had felt such a revulsion toward him, and despite of it resolved to be kind to him, she went to the extreme and treated him better than ever.

The judge was unchanged in *his* manner to the struggling youth.

And so the time went on and the month of November arrived.

Ishmael kept the Rushy Shore schoolhouse in mind. Up to this time, no schoolmaster had been found to undertake its care. And Ishmael resolved if it should remain vacant until his engagement with the judge should be finished, he would then take it himself.

All this while Ishmael, true to the smallest duty, had not neglected Reuben Gray's account books. They had been brought to him by Gray every week to be posted up. But it was the second week in November before Ishmael was able to walk to Woodside and see Hannah's babes, now fine children of nearly three months of age. Of course Ishmael, in the genial-

ity of his nature, was delighted with them, and equally, of course, he delighted their mother with their praises.

The last two weeks in November were devoted by the judge and his family to preparations for their departure.

As the time slipped and the interval of their stay grew shorter and shorter, Ishmael began to count the days, treasuring each precious day that still gave him to the sight of Claudia.

On the last day but one before their departure, all letters having been finished, the judge was in his library, selecting books to be packed and sent off to his city residence. Ishmael was assisting him. When their task was completed, the judge turned to the youth and said:

"Now, Ishmael, I will leave the keys of the library in your possession. You will come occasionally to see that all is right here; and you will air and dust the books, and in wet weather have a fire kindled to keep them from molding, for in the depths of this forest it is very damp in winter. In recompense for your care of the library, Ishmael, I will give you the use of such law books as you may need to continue your studies. Here is a list of works that I recommend you to read in the order in which they are written down," said the judge, handing the youth a folded paper.

"I thank you, sir; I thank you, very much," answered Ishmael, fervently.

"You can either read them here, or take them home with you, just as you please," continued the judge.

"You are very kind and I am very grateful, sir."

"It seems to me I am only just, and scarcely that, Ishmael! The county court opens at Shelton on the first of December. I would strongly recommend you to attend its sessions, and watch its trials; it will be a very good school for you, and a great help to the progress of your studies."

"Thank you, sir, I will follow your advice."

"And after a while I hope you will be able to go for a term or two to one of the good Northern law schools."

"I hope so, sir; and for that purpose, I must work hard."

"And if you ever should succeed in getting admitted to the bar, Ishmael, I should advise you to go to the Far West. It may seem premature to give you this counsel now, but I give it, while I think of it, because after parting with you I may never see you again."

"Again I thank you, Judge Merlin; but if ever that day of success should come for me, it will find me in my native State. I have an especial reason for fixing my home here; and here I must succeed or fail!" said Ishmael, earnestly, as he thought of his mother's early death, and unhonored grave, and his vow to rescue her memory from reproach.

"It appears to me that your native place would be the last spot on earth where you, with your talents, would consent to remain," said the judge, significantly.

"I have a reason—a sacred reason, sir," replied Ishmael, earnestly, yet with some reserve in his manner.

"A reason 'with which the stranger intermeddleth not,' I suppose?"

Ishmael bowed gravely, in assent.

"Very well, my young friend; I will not inquire what it may be," said Judge Merlin, who was busying himself at his writing bureau, among some papers, from which he selected one, which he brought forward to the youth, saying:

"Here, Ishmael—here is a memorandum of your services, which I have taken care to keep; for I knew full well that if I waited for you to present me a bill, I might wait forever. You will learn to do such things, however, in time. Now I find by my memorandum that I owe you about sixty dollars. Here is the money. There, now, do not draw back and flush all over your face at the idea of taking money you have well earned. Oh, but you will get over *that* in time, and when you are a lawyer, you will hold out your hand for a thumping fee, before you give an opinion on a case!" laughed the judge, as he forced a roll of bank notes into Ishmael's hands, and left the library.

The remainder of the day was spent in sending off wagon loads of boxes to the landing on the river side, where they were taken off by a rowboat, and conveyed on board the *Canvas Back*, that lay at anchor opposite Tanglewood, waiting for the freight, to transport it to the city.

On the following Saturday morning, the judge and his daughter left Tanglewood for Washington. She traveled in the private carriage, driven by the heroic "Sam," and attended by a mounted groom. The parting, which shook Ishmael's whole nature like a storm, nearly rending soul and body asunder, seemed to have but little effect upon Miss Merlin. She went through it with great decorum, shaking hands with Ishmael, wishing him success, and hoping to see him, some fine day, on the bench!

This Claudia said laughing, as with good-humored raillery.

But Ishmael bowed very gravely, and though his heart was breaking, answered calmly:

"I hope so too, Miss Merlin. We shall see."

"*Au revoir!*" said Claudia, her eyes sparkling with mirth.

"*Until we meet!*" answered Ishmael, solemnly, as he closed the carriage door, and gave the coachman the word to drive off.

As the carriage rolled away, the beautiful girl, who was its sole passenger, and whose eyes had been sparkling with mirth but an instant before, now threw her hands up to her face,

fell back in her seat, and burst into a tempest of sobs and tears.

Ignorant of what was going on within its curtained inclosure, Ishmael remained standing and gazing after the vanishing carriage, which was quickly lost to view in the deep shadows of the forest road, until Judge Merlin, who at the last moment had decided to travel on horseback, rode up to take leave of him and follow the carriage.

"Well! good-by, my young frie! Take care of yourself!" were the last adieus of the judge, as he shook hands with Ishmael, and rode away.

"I wish you a pleasant journey, sir," were the final words of Ishmael, sent after the galloping horse.

Then the young man, with desolation in his heart, turned into the house, to set the library in order, lock it up, and remove his own few personal effects from the premises.

Reuben Gray, who had come up to assist the judge, received his final orders, and see him off, waited outside with his light wagon to take Ishmael and his luggage home to Woodside. Reuben helped Ishmael to transfer his books, clothing, etc., to the little wagon. And then Ishmael, after having taken leave of Aunt Katie, and left a small present in her hand, jumped into his seat, and was driven off by Reuben.

The arrangement at Tanglewood had occupied nearly the whole of the short winter forenoon, so that it was twelve o'clock meridian when they reached Woodside.

They found a very comfortable sitting room awaiting them. Reuben, in the pride of paternity, had refurnished it. There was a warm red carpet on the floor, warm red curtains at the windows; a bright fire burning in the fireplace; a neat dinner table set out, and best of all, Hannah seated in a low rocking chair, with one rosy babe on her lap and another in the soft, white cradle bed by her side. Hannah laid the baby she held beside its brother in the cradle, and arose and went to Ishmael, and took him in her arms and welcomed him home again, saying:

"Oh, my dear boy, I am so glad you have come back! I will make you happier with us, lad, than you have ever been before."

"You have always been very good to me, Aunt Hannah," said Ishmael, warmly, returning her embrace.

"No, I haven't, Ishmael, no, I haven't, my boy; but I will be. Sally! bring in the fish directly. You know very well that Ishmael don't like rockfish boiled too much," she said, by way of commencement.

The order was immediately obeyed, and the family sat down to the table. The thrifty overseer's wife had provided a sumptuous dinner in honor of her nephew's return. The thriv-

ing overseer could afford to be extravagant once in a while. Ah! very different were these days of plenty at Woodside to those days of penury at the Hill Hut. And Hannah thought of the difference, as she dispensed the good things from the head of her well-supplied table. The rockfish with egg sauce was followed by a boiled ham and roast ducks with sage dressing, and the dinner was finished off with apple pudding and mince pies and new cider.

Ishmael tried his best to do justice to the luxuries affection had provided for him; but after all he could not satisfy the expectation of Hannah, who complained bitterly of his want of appetite.

After dinner, when the young man had gone upstairs to arrange his books and clothes in his own room, and had left Hannah and Reuben alone, Hannah again complained of Ishmael's derelictions to the duty of the dinner table.

"It's no use talking, Hannah; he can't help it. His heart is so full—so full, that he ain't got room in his insides for no victuals! And that's just about the truth on't. 'Twas the same way with me when I was young and in love long o' you! And wa'n't you corntrairy nyther? Lord, Hannah, why when you used to get on your high horse with me, I'd be offen my feed for weeks and weeks together. My heart would be swelled up to my very throat, and my stomach wouldn't be nowhar!"

"Reuben, don't be a fool; it's not becoming in the father of a family," said Mrs. Hannah, proudly glancing at the twins.

"Law, so it isn't; so it isn't, Hannah, woman. But surely I was only a-telling of you what ailed Ishmael, as he was off his feed."

"But what foolishness and craziness and sottishness for Ishmael to be in love with Miss Merlin!" exclaimed Hannah, impatiently.

"Law, woman, who ever said love was anything else but craziness and the rest of it," laughed Gray.

"But Miss Merlin thinks no more of Ishmael than she does of the dirt under her feet," said Hannah, bitterly.

"Begging your pardon, she thinks a deal more of him than she'd like anybody to find out," said honest Reuben, winking.

"How did *you* find it out then?" inquired his wife.

"Law, Hannah, I haven't been fried and froze, by turn, with all sorts of fever and ague love fits, all the days of my youth, without knowing of the symptoms. And I tell you as how the high and mighty heiress, Miss Claudia Merlin, loves the very buttons on our Ishmael's coat better nor she loves the whole world and all the people in it besides. And no wonder! for of all the young men as ever I seed, gentlemen or workingmen, Ishmael Worth is the most handsomest in his looks

and his manners, and his speech and all. And I believe, though I am not much of a judge, as he is the most intelligentest and book larnedest. I never seed his equal yet. Why, Hannah, I don't believe as there is e'er a prince a livin' as has finer manners, I don't!"

"But, Reuben, do you mean what you say? Do you really think Miss Claudia Merlin condescends to like Ishmael? I have heard of ladies doing such strange things sometimes; but Miss Claudia Merlin!"

"I told you, and I tell you again, as she loves the very buttons offen Ishmael's coat better nor she loves all the world besides. But she is as proud as Lucifer, and ready to tear her own heart out of her bosom for passion and spite, because she can't get Ishmael out of it! She'll never marry him, if you mean *that*; though I know sometimes young ladies will marry beneath them for love; but Miss Merlin will never do that. She would fling herself into burning fire first!"

The conversation could go no farther, for the subject of it was heard coming down the stairs, and the next moment he opened the door and entered the room.

He took a seat near Hannah, smiling and saying:

"For this one afternoon I shall take a holiday, Aunt Hannah, and enjoy the society of yourself and the babies."

"So do, Ishmael," replied the pleased and happy mother. And in the very effort to shake off his gloom, and please and be pleased, Ishmael found his sadness alleviated.

He was never weary of wondering at Hannah and her children. To behold his maiden aunt in the character of a wife had been a standing marvel to Ishmael. To contemplate her now as a mother was an ever-growing delight to the genial boy. She had lost her old-maidish appearance. She was fleshier, fairer and softer to look upon. And she wore a pretty bobbinet cap and a bright-colored calico wrapper, and she busied herself with needlework while turning the cradle with her foot, and humming a little nursery song. As for Reuben, he arose as Ishmael sat down, stood contemplating his domestic bliss for a few minutes, and then took his hat and went out upon his afternoon rounds among the field laborers. A happy man was Reuben Gray!

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE first thing Ishmael did, when he found himself again settled at Woodside, and had got over the anguish of his parting with Claudia and the excitement of his removal from Tanglewood, was to walk over to Rushy Shore and inquire of

overseer Brown whether a master had yet been heard of for the little school.

"No, nor ain't a-gwine to be! There ain't much temptation to anybody as knows anything about this 'ere school to take it. The chillun as comes to it;—well, *there*, they are just the dullest, headstrongest, forwardest set o' boys and gals as ever was; and their fathers and mothers, take 'em all together, are the bad payingest! The fact is, concarning this school, one may say as the wexation is sartin and the wages *un-sartin*," answered Brown, whom Ishmael found, as usual, sauntering through the fields with his pipe in his mouth.

"Well, then, as I am on my feet again, and no other master can be found, I will take it myself;—that is to say, if I can have it," said Ishmael.

"Well, I reckon you can. Mr. Middleton, he sent his lawyer down here to settle up affairs arter he had bought the property, and the lawyer, he told me, as I had been so long used to the place as I was to keep on a-managing of it for the new master; and as a letting out of this school house was a part of my business, I do s'pose as I can let you have it, if you like to take it."

"Yes, I should, and I engage it from the first of January. There are now but two weeks remaining until the Christmas holidays. So it is not worth while to open the school until these shall be over. But meanwhile, Brown, you can let your friends and neighbors know that the schoolhouse will be ready for the reception of pupils on Monday, the third of January."

"Very well, sir; I'll let them all know."

"And now, Brown, tell me, is Mr. Middleton's family coming in at the first of the year?" inquired Ishmael, anxiously.

"Oh, no, sir! the house is a deal too damp. In some places it leaks awful in rainy weather. There be a lot of repairs to be made. So it won't be ready for the family much afore the spring, if then."

"I am sorry to hear that. Will you give me Mr. Middleton's address?"

"His—which, sir?"

"Tell me where I can write to him."

"Oh! he is at Washington, present speaking; Franklin Square, Washington City; that will find him."

"Thank you." And shaking hands with the worthy overseer Ishmael departed.

And the same day he wrote and posted a letter to Mr. Middleton.

The intervening two weeks between that day and Christmas was spent by Ishmael, as usual, in work and in study. He made up the whole year's accounts for Reuben Gray, and put

his farm books in perfect order. While Ishmael was engaged in this latter job, it occurred to him that he could not always be at hand to assist Reuben, and that it would be much better for Gray to learn enough of arithmetic and bookkeeping to make him independent of other people's help in keeping his accounts.

So when Ishmael brought him his books one evening, and told him they were all in order up to that present day, and Reuben said:

"Thank you, Ishmael! I don't know what I should do without you, my lad!" Ishmael answered him, saying very earnestly:

"Uncle Reuben, all the events of life are proverbially very uncertain; and it may happen that you may be obliged to do without me; in which case, would it not be well for you to be prepared for such a contingency?"

"What do you mean, Ishmael?" inquired Gray, in alarm.

"I mean—had you not better learn to keep your books yourself, in case you should lose me?"

"Oh, Ishmael, I do hope you are not a-going to leave us!" exclaimed Reuben, in terror.

"Not until duty obliges me to do so, and that may not be for years. It is true that I have taken the Rushy Shore schoolhouse, which I intend to open on the third of January; but then I shall continue to reside here with you, and walk backward and forward between this and that."

"What! every day there and back, and it such a distance!"

"Yes, Uncle Reuben; I can manage to do so, by rising an hour earlier than usual," said Ishmael, cheerfully.

"You rise airy enough now, in all conscience! You're up at daybreak! If you get up airlier nor that, and take that long walk twice every day, it will wear you out and kill you—that is all."

"It will do me good, Uncle Reuben! It will be just the sort of exercise in the open air that I shall require to antidote the effect of my sedentary work in the schoolroom," said Ishmael, cheerfully.

"That's you, Ishmael! allers looking on the bright side of everything, and taking hold of all tools by the smooth handle! I hardly think any hardship in this world as could be put upon you, would be took amiss by *you*, Ishmael."

"I am glad you think so well of me, Uncle Reuben; I must try to retain your good opinion; it was not of myself I wished to speak, however, but of *you*. I hope you will learn to keep your own accounts, so as to be independent of anybody else's assistance. If you would give me a half an hour's attention every night, I could teach you to do it well in the course of a few weeks or months."

"Law, Ishmael, that would give you more trouble than keeping the books yourself."

"I can teach you, and keep the books besides, until you are well able to do it yourself."

"Law, Ishmael, how will you ever find the time to do all that, and keep school, and read law, and take them long walks besides?"

"Why, Uncle Reuben, I can always find time to do every duty I undertake," replied the persevering boy.

"One would think your days were forty-eight hours long, Ishmael, for you to get through all the work as you undertake."

"But how about the lessons, Uncle Reuben?"

"Oh, Ishmael, I'm too old to larn; it ain't worth while now; I'm past fifty, you know."

"Well, but you are a fine, strong healthy man, and may live to be eighty or ninety. Now, if I can teach you in two or three months an art which will be useful to you every day of your life, for thirty or forty years, don't you think that it is quite worth while to learn it?"

"Well, Ishmael, you have got a way of putting things as makes people think they're reasonable, whether or no, and convinces of folks agin' their will. I think, arter all, belike you oughter be a lawyer, if so be you'd turn a judge and jury round your finger as easy as you turn other people. I'll e'en larn of you, Ishmael, though it do look rum like for an old man like me to go to school to a boy like you."

"That is right, Uncle Reuben. You'll be a good accountant yet before the winter is over," laughed Ishmael.

Christmas came; but it would take too long to tell of the rustic merry-makings in a neighborhood noted for the festive style in which it celebrates its Christmas holidays. There were dinner, supper, and dancing parties in all the cottages during the entire week. Reuben Gray gave a rustic ball on New Year's evening. And all the country beaus and belles of his rank in society came and danced at it. And Ishmael, in the geniality of his nature, made himself so agreeable to everybody that he unconsciously turned the heads of half the young girls in the room, who unanimously pronounced him "quite the gentleman."

This was the last as well as the gayest party of the holidays. It broke up at twelve midnight, because the next day was Sunday.

On Monday, Ishmael arose early and walked over to Rushy Shore, opened his schoolhouse, lighted a fire in it, and sat down at his teacher's desk to wait the arrival of his pupils.

About eight or nine o'clock they began to come, by ones, twos and threes; some attended by their parents and some alone. Rough-looking customers they were, to be sure; shock-

headed, sunburned, and freckle-faced girls and boys of the humblest class of "poor whites," as they are called in the slave States.

Ishmael received them, each and all, with that genial kindness which always won the hearts of all who knew him.

In arranging his school and classifying his pupils, Ishmael found the latter as ignorant, stubborn and forward as they had been represented to him.

Sam White would not go into the same class with Pete Johnson, because Pete's father got drunk and was "had up" for fighting. Susan Jones would not sit beside Ann Bates because Ann's mother "hired out." Jem Ellis, who was a big boy that did not know his A B C's, insisted on being put at the head of the highest class because he was the tallest pupil in the school. And Sarah Brown refused to go into any class at all, because her father was the overseer of the estate, and she felt herself above them all!

These objections and claims were all put forth with loud voices and rude gestures.

But Ishmael, though shocked, was not discouraged. "In patience he possessed his soul" that day. And after a while he succeeded in calming all these turbulent spirits and reducing his little kingdom to order.

It was a very harassing day, however, and after he had dismissed his school and walked home, and given Reuben Gray his lesson, and posted the account book, and read a portion of his "Coke," he retired to bed, thoroughly wearied in mind and body and keenly appreciative of the privilege of rest. From this day forth, Ishmael worked harder and suffered more privations than, perhaps, he had ever done at any former period of his life.

He rose every morning at four o'clock, before any of the family were stirring; dressed himself neatly; read a portion of the Holy Scriptures by candlelight; said his prayers; ate the cold breakfast that had been laid out for him the night before; and set off to walk five miles to his schoolhouse.

He usually reached it at half-past six; opened and aired the room, and made the fire; and then sat down to read law until the arrival of the hour for the commencement of the studies.

He taught diligently until twelve o'clock; then he dismissed the pupils for two hours to go home and get their dinners; he ate the cold luncheon of bread and cheese or meat that he had brought with him; and set off to walk briskly the distance of a mile and a half to Shelton, where the court was in session, and where he spent an hour, watching their proceedings, and taking notes. He got back to his school at two o'clock; called in his pupils for the afternoon session; and taught diligently until six o'clock in the afternoon, when he dismissed

them for the day, shut up the schoolhouse, and set off to walk home.

He usually reached Woodside at about seven o'clock, where he found them waiting tea for him. As this was the only meal Ishmael could take at home, Hannah always took care that it should be a comfortable and abundant one. After tea, he would give Reuben his lesson in bookkeeping, post up the day's accounts, and then retire to his room to study for an hour or two before going to bed. This was the history of five days out of every week of Ishmael's life.

On Saturdays, according to custom, the school had a holiday; and Ishmael spent the morning in working in the garden. As it was now the depth of winter there was but little to do, and half a day's work in the week sufficed to keep all in order. Saturday afternoons Ishmael went over to open and air the library at Tanglewood, and to return the books he had read and bring back new ones. Saturday evenings he spent very much as he did the preceding ones—in giving Reuben his lesson, in posting up the week's accounts, and in reading law until bed-time.

On Sundays Ishmael rested from worldly labors, and went to church to refresh his soul. But for this Sabbath's rest, made obligatory upon him by the Christian law, Ishmael must have broken down under his severe labors. As it was, however, the benign Christian law of the Sabbath's holy rest proved his salvation.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

IN this persevering labor, Ishmael cheerfully passed the winter months.

He had not heard one word of Claudia, or of her father, except such scant news as reached him through the judge's occasional letters to the overseer.

He had received an encouraging note from Mr. Middleton in answer to the letter he had written to that gentleman. About the first of April Ishmael's first quarterly school bills began to be due.

Tuition fees were not high in that poor neighborhood, and his pay for each pupil averaged about two dollars a quarter. His school numbered thirty pupils, about one third of whom never paid, consequently, at the end of the first three months, his net receipts were just forty-two dollars. Not very encouraging this, yet Ishmael was pleased and happy, especially as he felt that he was really doing the little savages intrusted to his care a great deal of good.

Half of this money Ishmael would have forced upon Hannah

and Reuben; but Hannah flew into a passion and demanded to be informed if her nephew took her for a money-grub; and Reuben quietly assured the young man that his services overpaid his board; which was quite true.

One evening, about the middle of April, Ishmael sat at his school desk mending pens, setting copies, and keeping an eye on a refractory boy who had been detained after school hours, to learn a lesson he had failed to know in his class.

Ishmael had just finished setting his last copy and was engaged in piling the copy books neatly, one on top of another, when there came a soft tap at the door.

"Come in," said Ishmael, fully expecting to see some of the refractory boy's friends come to inquire after him.

The door opened and a very young lady, in a gray silk dress, straw hat and blue ribbons, entered the schoolroom.

Ishmael looked up, gave one glance at the fair, sweet face, serious blue eyes and soft light ringlets, and dropped his copy books, came down from his seat and hurried to meet the visitor, exclaiming:

"Bee! Oh, dear, dear Bee, I am so glad to see you!"

"So am I you, Ishmael," said Beatrice Middleton, frankly giving her hand to be shaken.

"Bee! oh, I beg pardon! Miss Middleton I mean! it is such a happiness to me to see you again!"

"So it is to me to see you, Ishmael," frankly answered Beatrice.

"You will sit down and rest, Bee?—Miss Middleton!" exclaimed Ishmael, running to bring his own school chair for her accommodation.

"I will sit down *Bee*. None of my old schoolmates call me anything else, Ishmael, and I should hardly know my little self by any other name," said Bee, taking the offered seat.

"I thank you very much for letting me call you so! It really went against all old feelings of friendship to call you otherwise."

"Why certainly it did!"

"I hope your father and all the family are well?"

"All except mamma, who, you know, is very delicate."

"Yes, I know. They are all down here, of course?"

"No; no one but myself and one man and maid-servant."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; I came down to see to the last preparations, so as to have everything in order and comfortable for mamma when she comes."

"Still 'mamma's right-hand woman,' Bee!"

"Well, yes; I must be so. You know her health is very uncertain, and there are so many children! two more since you left us, Ishmael! And they are all such a responsibility!"

"And as mamma is so delicate and I am the eldest daughter I must take much of the care of them all upon myself," replied the girl-woman, very gravely.

"Yes, I suppose so; and yet—" Ishmael hesitated and Bee took up the discourse:

—"I know what you were thinking of, Ishmael! That some other than myself ought to have been found to come down to this uninhabited house to make the final preparations for the reception of the family; but really now, Ishmael, when you come to think of it, *who could* have been found so competent as myself for this duty? To be sure, you know, we sent an upholsterer down with the new furniture, and with particular instructions as to its arrangement: every carpet, set of curtains and suit of furniture, marked with the name of the room for which it was destined. But then, you know, there are a hundred other things to be done, after the upholsterer has quitted the house, that none but a woman and a member of the family would know how to do—cut glass and china and cutlery to be taken out of their cases and arranged in sideboards and cupboards; and bed and table linen to be unpacked and put into drawers and closets; and the children's beds to be aired and made up; and mamma's own chamber and nursery made ready for her; and, last of all, for the evening that they are expected to arrive, a nice delicate supper got. Now, who was there to attend to all this but me?" questioned Beatrice, looking gravely into Ishmael's face. And as she waited for an answer, Ishmael replied:

"Why—failing your mamma, your papa might have done it, without any derogation from his manly dignity. When General Washington was in Philadelphia, during his first presidential term, with all the cares of the young nation upon his shoulders, he superintended the fitting up of his town house for the reception of Mrs. Washington; descending even to the details of hanging curtains and setting up mangles!"

Beatrice laughed, as she said:

"Law, Ishmael! haven't you got over your habit of quoting your heroes yet? And have you really faith enough to hope that modern men will come up to their standard? Of course, George Washington was equal to every human duty from the conquering of Cornwallis to—the crimping of a cap border, if necessary! for he was a miracle! But my papa, God bless him, though wise and good, is but a man, and would no more know how to perform a woman's duties than I should how to do a man's! What should *he* know of china closets and linen chests? Why, Ishmael, he doesn't know *fi'*penny bit cotton from five shilling linen, and would have been as apt as not to have ordered the servants' sheets on the children's beds and *vice versa*; and for mamma's supper he would have been as

likely to have fried pork as the broiled spring chickens that I shall provide! No, Ishmael; gentlemen may be great masters in Latin and Greek; but they are hopeless dunces in housekeeping matters."

"As far as *your* experience goes, Bee."

"Of course, as far as my experience goes."

"When did you reach Bushy Shore, Bee?"

"Last night about seven o'clock. Matty came with me in the carriage, and Jason drove us. We spent all day in unpacking and arranging the things, that had been sent down on the *Canvas Back* a week or two ago. And this afternoon I thought I would walk over here and see what sort of school you had. Papa read your letter to us, and we were all interested in your success here."

"Thank you, dear Bee; I know that you are all among my very best friends; and some of these days, Bee, I hope, I trust, to do credit to your friendship."

"That you will, Ishmael! What do you think my papa told my uncle Merlin?—that 'that young man (meaning you) was destined to make his mark on this century.'"

A deep blush of mingled pleasure, bashfulness and aspiration mantled Ishmael's delicate face. He bowed with sweet, grave courtesy, and changed the subject of conversation, by saying:

"I hope Judge Merlin and his daughter are quite well?"

"Quite! They are still at Annapolis. Papa visited them there for a few days last week. The judge is stopping at the 'Stars and Stripes' hotel, and Claudia is a parlor boarder at a celebrated French school in the vicinity. Claudia will not 'come out' until next winter, when her father goes to Washington. For, next December, Claudia will be eighteen years of age, and will enter upon her mother's large property, according to the terms of the marriage settlement and the mother's will. I suppose she will be the richest heiress in America, for the property is estimated at more than a million! Ah! it is fine to be Claudia Merlin—is it not, Ishmael?"

"Very," answered the young man, scarcely conscious, amid the whirl of his emotions, what he was saying.

"And what a sensation her entrée into society will make! I should like to be in Washington next winter when she comes out! Ah! but after all—what a target for fortune hunters she will be, to be sure!" sighed Bee.

"She is beautiful and accomplished, and altogether lovely enough to be sought for herself alone!" exclaimed Ishmael, in the low and faltering tones of deep feeling.

"Ah, yes, if she were *poor*; but who on earth could see whether the heiress of a million were pretty or plain; good or bad; witty or stupid?"

"So young and so cynical!" said Ishmael, sadly.

"Ah, Ishmael, whoever reads and observes must feel and reflect; and whoever feels and reflects must soon lose the simple faith of childhood. We shall see!" said Bee, rising and drawing her gray silk scarf around her shoulders.

"You are not going?"

"Yes; I have much yet to do."

"Can I not help you?"

"Oh, no; there is nothing that I have to do that a classical and mathematical scholar and nursling lawyer could understand."

"Then, at least, allow me to see you safely home. The nursling lawyer can do that, I suppose? If you will be pleased to sit down until I hear this young hopeful say his lesson, I will close up the schoolroom and be at your service."

"Thank you very much; but I have to call at Brown's, the overseer's, and I would much rather you would not trouble yourself, Ishmael. Good-by. When we all get settled up at the house, which must be by next Saturday night, at farthest, you must come often to see us. It was to say this that I came here."

"Thank you, dearest Bee! I shall esteem it a great privilege to come."

"Prove it," laughed Bee, as she waved adieu, and tripped out of the schoolroom.

Ishmael called up his pupil for recitation.

The little savage could not say his lesson, and began to weep and rub his eyes with the sleeve of his jacket.

"You mought let me off this once, anyways," he sobbed.

"But why should I?" inquired Ishmael.

"Acause of the pretty lady a-coming."

Ishmael laughed, and for a moment entertained the thought of admitting this plea and letting the pleader go. But Ishmael was really too conscientious to suffer himself to be lured aside from the strict line of duty by any passing fancy or caprice; so he answered:

"Your plea is an ingenious one, Eddy; and since you have wit enough to make it, you must have sense enough to learn your lesson. Come, now, let us sit down and put our heads together, and try again, and see what we can do."

And with the kindness for which he was ever noted, the young master sat down beside his stupid pupil, and patiently went over and over the lesson with him, until he had succeeded in getting it into Eddy's thick head.

"There, now! now you know the difference between a common noun and a proper one! are you not glad?" asked Ishmael, smiling.

"Yes; but they'll all be done supper, and the hominy 'll be cold!" said the boy, sulkily.

"Oh, no, it will not. I know all about the boiling of hominy. They'll keep the pot hanging over the fire until bed-time, so you can have yours hot as soon as you get home. Off with you, now!" laughed Ishmael.

His hopeful pupil lost no time in obeying the order, but set off on a run.

Ishmael arranged his books, closed up his schoolroom, and started to walk home.

There he delighted Hannah with the news that her former friend and patron, Mrs. Middleton, was soon expected at Rushy Shore. And he interested both Reuben and Hannah with the description of beautiful Bee's visit to the school.

"I wonder why he couldn't have fallen in love with *her*?" thought Hannah.

CHAPTER XLIX.

BEATRICE did not come again to the schoolroom to see Ishmael. The memory of old school-day friendship, as well as the prompting of hospitality and benevolence, had brought her there on her first visit. She had not thought of the lapse of time, or the change that two years must have made in him as well as in herself, and so, where she expected to find a mere youth, she found a young man; and maiden delicacy restrained her from repeating her visit.

On Thursday morning, however, as Ishmael was opening his schoolroom, he heard a brisk step approaching, and Mr. Middleton was at his side. Their hands flew into each other and shook mutually before either spoke. Then, with beaming eyes and hearty tones, both exclaimed at once:

"I am so glad to see you!"

"Of course you arrived last night! I hope you had a pleasant journey, and that Mrs. Middleton has recovered her fatigue," said Ishmael, placing a chair for his visitor.

"A very pleasant journey! The day was delightfully cool, and even my wife did not suffer from fatigue. She is quite well this morning, and quite delighted with her new home. But, see here, Ishmael! how you have changed! You are taller than I am! You must be near six feet in height! Are you not?"

"I suppose so," smiled Ishmael.

"And your hair is so much darker. Altogether, you are so much improved."

"There was room for it."

"There always is, my boy. Well, I did not come here to pay compliments, my young friend. I came to tell you that, thanks to my little Bee's activity, we are all comfortably set-

tled at home now; and we should be happy if you would come on Friday evening and spend with us Saturday and Sunday, your weekly holidays."

"I thank you, sir; I thank you very much. I should extremely like to come, but—"

"Now, Ishmael, hush! I do not intend to take a denial. When I give an invitation I am always very much in earnest about it; and to show you how much I am in earnest about *this*, I will tell you that I reflected this was Thursday, and that if I asked you to-day you could tell your friends when you get home this evening, and come to-morrow morning prepared to remain over till Monday. Otherwise, if I had not invited you until to-morrow morning, you would have had to walk all the way back home to-morrow evening to tell your friends before coming to see us. So you see how much I wished to have you come, Ishmael, and how I studied ways and means. Mrs. Middleton and all your old schoolmates are equally anxious to see you, so say no more about it, but come!"

"Indeed, I earnestly thank you, Mr. Middleton, and I was not about to decline your kind invitation in toto, but only to say that I am occupied with duties that I cannot neglect on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings; but on Saturday evening I shall be very happy to come over and spend Sunday with you."

"Very well, then, Ishmael; so be it; I accept so much of your pleasant company, since no more of it is to be had. By the way, Ishmael!"

"Yes, sir."

"That was a gallant feat and a narrow escape of yours, as it was described to me by my niece Claudia. Nothing less than the preservation of her life could have justified you in such a desperate act."

"I am grateful to Miss Merlin for remembering it, sir."

"As if she ever could forget it! Good Heaven! Well, Ishmael, I see that your pupils are assembling fast. I will not detain you from your duties longer. Good morning; and remember that we shall expect you on Saturday evening."

"Good morning, sir; I will remember; pray give my respects to Mrs. Middleton and all the family."

"Certainly," said Mr. Middleton, as he walked away.

Ishmael reentered the schoolroom, rang the bell to call the pupils in, and commenced the duties of the day.

On Saturday afternoon, all his weekly labors being scrupulously finished, Ishmael walked over to Rushy Shore Beacon, as Mr. Middleton's house was called.

It was a very large old edifice of white stone, and stood upon the extreme point of a headland running out into the river.

There were many trees behind it, landward; but none before it, seaward, so that really the tall white house, with its many windows, might well serve as a beacon to passing vessels.

Around the headland upon which it was situated, the waters swept with a mighty impetus and a deafening roar that gave the place its descriptive name of Rushy Shore. As the air and water here were mildly salt, the situation was deemed very healthy and well suited to such delicate lungs as required a stimulating atmosphere, and yet could not bear the full strength of the sea breezes. As such the place had been selected by Mr. Middleton for the residence of his invalid wife.

When Ishmael approached the house, he found the family all assembled in the long front porch to enjoy the fine water view.

Walter Middleton, who was the first to spy Ishmael's approach, ran down the steps and out to meet him, exclaiming, as he caught and shook his hand:

"How are you, old boy? how are you? looking in high health and handsomeness, at any rate! I should have come down to the school to see you, Ishmael; only, on the very morning after our arrival, I had to mount my horse and ride down to Baymouth to attend to some business for my father, and I did not get back until late last night. Come, hurry on to the house! My mother is anxious to see her old favorite."

And so, overpowering Ishmael with the cordiality of his greeting, Walter drew his friend's arm within his own, and took him upon the porch in the midst of the family group, that immediately surrounded and warmly welcomed him.

"How handsome and manly you have grown, my dear," said Mrs. Middleton, with almost motherly pride in her favorite.

Ishmael blushed and bowed in reply to this direct compliment. And soon he was seated among them, chatting pleasantly.

This was but the first of many delightful visits to Rushy Shore, enjoyed by Ishmael. Mr. Middleton liked to have him there, and often pressed him to come. And Ishmael, who very well knew the difference between invitations given from mere politeness and those prompted by a sincere desire for his company, frequently accepted them.

One day Mr. Middleton, who took a deep interest in the struggles of Ishmael, said to him:

"You should enter some law school, my young friend."

"I intend to do so, sir, as soon as I have accomplished two things."

"And what are they?"

"Saved money enough to defray my expenses and found a substitute for myself as master of this little school."

"Oh, bother the school! you must not always be sacrificing

yourself to the public welfare, Ishmael," laughed Mr. Middleton, who sometimes permitted himself to use rough words.

"But to duty, sir?"

"Oh, if you once make it a question of duty, I have no more to say," was the concluding remark of Ishmael's friend.

Thus, in diligent labor and intellectual intercourse, the young man passed the summer months.

One bright hope burned constantly before Ishmael's mental vision—of seeing Claudia; but, ah! this hope was destined to be deferred from week to week, and finally disappointed.

Judge Merlin did not come to Tanglewood as usual this summer. He took his daughter to the seaside instead, where they lived quietly at a private boarding-house, because it was not intended that Miss Merlin should enter society until the coming winter at Washington.

To Ishmael this was a bitter disappointment, but a bitter tonic, too, since it served to give strength to his mind.

Late in September, his friend Walter Middleton, who was a medical student, left them to attend the autumn and winter course of lectures in Baltimore. Ishmael felt the loss of his society very much; but as usual consoled himself by hard work, through all the autumn months.

He heard from Judge Merlin and his daughter through their letters to the Middletons. They were again in Annapolis, where Miss Merlin was passing her last term at the finishing school, but they were to go to Washington at the meeting of Congress in December.

As the month of November drew to a close, Ishmael began to compute the labors, progress and profits of the year. He found that he had brought his school into fine working order; he had brought his pupils on well; he had made Reuben Gray a very good reader, penman, arithmetician and bookkeeper; and lastly, he had advanced himself very far in his chosen professional studies. But he had made but little money, and saved less than a hundred dollars. This was not enough to support him, even by the severest economy, at any law school. Something else, he felt, must be done for the next year, by which more money might be made. So after reflecting upon the subject for some time, he wrote out two advertisements—one for a teacher, competent to take charge of a small country school, and the other for a situation as bookkeeper, clerk, or amanuensis. In the course of a week, the first advertisement was answered by a Methodist preacher living in the same neighborhood, who proposed to augment the small salary he received for preaching on Sundays, by teaching a day school all the week. Ishmael had an interview with this gentleman, and finding him all that could be desired in a clergyman and country schoolmaster, willingly engaged to re-

linquish his own post in favor of the new candidate on the first of the coming year.

His second advertisement was not yet answered; but Ishmael kept it on and anxiously awaited the result.

At length his perseverance was crowned with a success greater than he could have anticipated. It was about the middle of December, a few days before the breaking up of his school for the Christmas holidays, that he called at the Shelton post office to ask if there were any letters for "X. Y. Z.," those being the initials he had signed to his second advertisement. A letter was handed him; at last, then, it had come! Without scrutinizing the handwriting or the superscription, Ishmael tore it open and read:

WASHINGTON, December 14.

Mr. "X. Y. Z."—I have seen your advertisement in the *Intelligencer*. I am in want of an intelligent and well-educated young man to act as my confidential secretary, and occasional amanuensis. If you will write to me, inclosing testimonials and references as to your character and competency, and stating the amount of salary you will expect to receive, I hope we may come to a satisfactory arrangement.

Respectfully yours.

RANDOLPH MERLIN.

It was from Claudia's father, then! It was a stroke of fate, or so it seemed to the surprised and excited mind of Ishmael!

Trembling with joy, he retired to the private parlor of the quiet little village inn to answer the letter, so that it might go off to Washington by the mail that started that afternoon. He smiled to himself as he wrote that Judge Merlin himself had had ample opportunity of personally testing the character and ability of the advertiser, but that if further testimony were needed, he begged to refer to Mr. James Middleton, of Rushy Shore. Finally, he left the question of the amount of salary to be settled by the judge himself. He signed, sealed and directed this letter, and hurried to the post office to post it before the closing of the mail.

And then he went home in a maze of delight.

Three anxious days passed, and then Ishmael received his answer. It was a favorable and a conclusive one. The judge told him that from the post office address given in the advertisement, as well as from other circumstances, he had supposed the advertiser to be Ishmael, himself, but could not be sure until he had received his letter, when he was glad to find his suppositions correct, as he should much rather receive into his family, in a confidential capacity, a known young man like

Mr. Worth, than any stranger, however well recommended the latter might be; he would fix the salary at three hundred dollars, with board and lodging, if that would meet the young gentleman's views; if the terms suited, he hoped Mr. Worth would lose no time in joining him in Washington, as he, the writer, was overwhelmed with correspondence that was still accumulating.

Ishmael answered this second letter immediately, saying that he would be in Washington on the following Tuesday.

After posting this letter he walked rapidly homeward, calling at Rushy Shore on his way to inform his friends, the Middletons, of his change of fortune. As Ishmael was not egotistical enough to speak of himself and his affairs until it became absolutely needful for him to do so, he had never told Mr. Middleton of his plan of giving up the school to the Methodist minister and seeking another situation for himself. And during the three days of his correspondence with Judge Merlin, he had not even seen Mr. Middleton, whom he only took time to visit on Saturday evenings.

Upon this afternoon, he reached Rushy Shore just as the family were sitting down to dinner. They were as much surprised as pleased to see him at such an unusual time as the middle of the week. Mr. Middleton got up to shake hands with him; Mrs. Middleton ordered another plate brought; Bee saw that room was made for another chair; and so Ishmael was welcomed by acclamation, and seated among them at the table.

"And now, young gentleman, tell us what it all means! For glad as we are to see you, and glad as you are to see us, we know very well that you did not take time to come here in the middle of the week *merely* to please yourself or us; pleasure not being your first object in life, Ishmael!" said Mr. Middleton.

"I regret to say, sir, that I came to tell you I am going away on Monday morning," replied Ishmael, gravely, for at the moment he felt a very real regret at the thought of leaving such good and true friends.

"Going away!" exclaimed all the family in a breath, and in consternation; for this boy, with his excellent character and charming manners, had deeply endeared himself to all his friends. "Going away!" they repeated.

"I am sorry to say it," said Ishmael.

"But this is so unexpected, so sudden!" said Mrs. Middleton.

"What the grand deuce is the matter? Have you enlisted for a soldier? engaged as a sailor? been seized with the gold fever?"

"Neither, sir; I will explain," said Ishmael. And forth-

with he told all his plans and prospects, in the fewest possible words.

"And so you are going to Washington, to be Randolph Merlin's clerk! Well, Ishmael, as he is a thorough lawyer, though no very brilliant barrister, I do not know that you could be in a better school! Heaven prosper you, my lad! By the way, Ishmael, just before you came in, we were all talking of going to Washington ourselves."

"Indeed! and is there really a prospect of your going?" inquired Ishmael, in pleased surprise.

"Well, yes. You see the judge wishes a chaperone for his daughter this winter, and has invited Mrs. Middleton, and in fact all the family, to come and spend the season with them in Washington. He says that he has taken the old Washington House, which is large enough to accommodate our united families and ten times as many."

"And you will go?" inquired Ishmael, anxiously.

"Well, yes—I think so. You see, this place, so preëminently healthy during eight months of the year, is rather too much exposed and too bleak in the depth of winter to suit my wife. She begins to cough already. And as Claudia really does need a matronly friend near her, and as the judge is very anxious for us to come, I think all interests will be best served by our going."

"I hope you will go very soon," said Ishmael.

"In a week or ten days," replied Mr. Middleton.

Ishmael soon after arose and took his leave, for he had a long walk before him, and a momentous interview with Hannah to brave at the end of it.

After tea that evening Ishmael broke the news to Reuben and Hannah. Both were considerably startled and bewildered, for they, no more than the Middletons, had received any previous hint of the young man's intentions. And now they really did not know whether to congratulate Ishmael on going to seek his fortune or to condone with him for leaving home! Reuben heartily shook hands with Ishmael and said how sorry he should be to part with him, but how glad he was that the young man was going to do something handsome for himself.

Hannah cried heartily, but for the life of her, could not have told whether it was for joy or sorrow. To her apprehension to go to Washington and be Judge Merlin's clerk seemed to be one of the greatest honors that any young man could attain; so she was perfectly delighted with that part of the affair. But, on the other hand, Ishmael had been to her like the most affectionate and dearest of sons, and to part with him seemed more than she could bear; so she wept vehemently and clung to her boy.

Reuben sought to console her.

"Never mind, Hannah, woman, never mind. It is the law of nature that the young bird must leave his nest and the young man his home! But never you mind! Washing-town-city ain't out'n the world, and any time as you want to see your boy very bad, I'll just put Dobbin to the wagon and cart you and the young uns up there for a day or two. Law, Hannah, my dear, you never should shed a tear if I could help it. 'Cause I feel kind o' guilty when you cry, Hannah, as if I ought to help it somehow!" said the good fellow.

"As if you could, Reuben! But it is I myself who do wrong to cry for anything when I am blessed with the love of such a heart as yours, Reuben! There, I will not cry any more! Of course, Ishmael must go to the city and make his fortune, and I ought to be glad, and I am glad, only I am sich a fool. Ishmael, my dear, this is Wednesday night, and you say you are going o' Monday morning; so there ain't no time to make you no new shirts and things before you go, but I'll make a lot of 'em, my boy, and send 'em up to you," said Hannah, wiping her eyes.

Ishmael opened his mouth to reply; but Reuben was before him with:

"So do, Hannah, my dear; that will be one of the best ways of comforting yourself, making up things for the lad; and you sha'n't want for the money, nor the fine linen nyther, Hannah, my dear! And when you have got them all done, you and I can take them up to him when we go to see him! So think of that and you won't be fretting after him. And now, childun, it is bedtime!"

On Friday evening Ishmael, in breaking up his school for the Christmas holidays, also took a final leave of his pupils. The young master had so endeared himself to his rough pupils that they grieved sincerely at the separation. The girls wept, and even rude boys sobbed. Our stupid little friend, Eddy, who could not learn grammar, had learned to love his kind young teacher, and at the prospect of parting with him and having the minister for a master roared aloud, saying:

"Master Worth have allers been good to us, so he have; but the minister—he'll lick us, ever so much!"

Ishmael distributed such parting gifts as his slender purse would afford, and so dismissed his pupils.

On Sunday evening he took leave of his friends, the Middletons, who promised to join him in Washington in the course of a week.

And on Monday morning he took leave of Hannah and Reuben, and walked to Baymouth to meet the Washington steam-boat.

CHAPTER L.

JUST north of the Capitol park, upon a gentle eminence, within its own well-shaded and well-cultivated grounds, stood a fine, old, family mansion, that had once been the temporary residence of George Washington.

The house was very large, with many spacious rooms and broad passages within, and many garden walks and trellised arbors around it.

In front were so many evergreen trees and in the rear was so fine a conservatory of blooming flowers, that even in the depth of winter it seemed like summer there.

The house was so secluded within its many thick trees and high garden walls that the noise of the city never reached its inmates; though they were within five minutes' walk of the Capitol and ten minutes' drive of the President's mansion.

Judge Merlin had been very fortunate in securing for the season this delightful home, where he could be within easy reach of his official business, and at the same time enjoy the quiet so necessary to his temperament.

That winter he had been appointed one of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States, and it was very desirable to have so pleasant a dwelling place within such easy reach of the Capitol, where the Court was held. At the head of this house his young daughter had been placed as its mistress. She had not yet appeared anywhere in public. She was reserving herself for two events: the arrival of her chaperone and the first evening reception of the President. Her presence in the city was not even certainly known beyond her own domestic circle; though a vague rumor, started no one knew by whom, was afloat, to the effect that Miss Merlin, the young Maryland heiress and beauty, was expected to come out in Washington during the current season.

Meanwhile she remained in seclusion in her father's house.

It was to this delightful town house, so like the country in its isolation, that Ishmael Worth was invited.

It was just at sunrise on Tuesday morning that the old steamer *Columbia*, having Ishmael on board, landed at the Seventh Street wharf, and the young man, destined some future day to fill a high official position in the Federal government, took his humble carpet bag in his hand and entered the Federal city.

Ah! many thousands had entered the National capital before him, and many more thousands would enter it after him, only to complain of it, to carp over it, to laugh at it, for its "magnificent distances," its unfinished buildings, its muddy streets and its mean dwellings.

But Ishmael entered within its boundaries with feelings of reverence and affection. It was the City of Washington, the sacred heart of the nation.

He had heard it called by shallow-brained and short-sighted people a sublime failure! It was a sublime idea, indeed, he thought, but no failure! Failure? Why what did those who called it so expect? Did they expect that the great capital of the great Republic should spring into full-grown existence as quickly as a hamlet around a railway station, or a village at a steamboat landing? Great ideas require a long time for their complete embodiment. And those who sneered at Washington were as little capable of foreseeing its future as the idlers about the steamboat wharf were of foretelling the fortunes of the modest-looking youth, in country clothes, who stood there gazing thoughtfully upon the city.

"Can you tell me the nearest way to Pennsylvania Avenue?" at length he asked of a bystander.

"Just set your face to the north and follow your nose for about a mile, and you'll fetch up to the broadest street as ever you see; and that'll be it," was the answer.

With this simple direction Ishmael went on until he came to the avenue, which he recognized at once from the description.

The Capitol, throned in majestic grandeur upon the top of its wooded hill at the eastern extremity of the avenue, and gleaming white in the rays of the morning sun, seeming to preside over the whole scene, next attracted Ishmael's admiration. As his way lay toward it, he had ample time to contemplate its imposing magnificence and beauty.

As he drew near it, however, he began to throw his eyes around the surrounding country in search of Judge Merlin's house. He soon identified it—a large old family mansion, standing in a thick grove of trees on a hill just north of the Capitol grounds. He turned to the left, ascended the hill, and soon found himself at the iron gate leading into the grounds.

Here his old acquaintance, Sam, being on duty as porter, admitted him, and, taking him by a winding gravel walk, that turned and twisted among groves and parterres, led him up to the house, and delivered him into the charge of a black footman, who was at that early hour engaged in opening the doors and windows.

He was the same Jim who used to wait on the table at Tanglewood.

"Good morning, Mr. Ishmael, sir," he said, advancing in a friendly and respectful manner, to receive the new arrival.

"The judge expected me this morning, Jim?" inquired Ishmael, when he had returned the greeting of the man.

"Oh, yes, sir; and ordered your room got ready for you.

The family ain't down yet, sir; but I can show you your room," said Jim, taking Ishmael's carpet bag from him, and leading the way upstairs.

They went up three flights of stairs, to a small front room in the third story, with one window, looking west.

Here Jim sat down the carpet bag, saying:

"It's rather high up, sir; but you see we are expecting Mrs. Middleton and all her family, and of course the best spare rooms has to be given up to the ladies. I think you will find everything you could wish for at hand, sir; but if there should be anything else wanted, you can ring, and one of the men servants will come up." And with this, Jim bowed and left the room.

Ishmael looked around upon his new domicile.

It was a very plain room, with simple maple furniture neatly arranged; a brown woolen carpet on the floor; white dimity curtains at the window; and a small coal fire in the grate. Yet it was much better than Ishmael had been accustomed to at home, and besides, the elevated position of the room, and the outlook from the only window, compensated for all deficiencies. Ishmael walked up to this window, put aside the dainty white curtain, and looked forth: the whole of the city of Washington, Georgetown, the windings of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers, Analostian Island, and the undulating hills of the Virginia and Maryland shores, lay spread like a vast panorama before him.

As the thicket was a necessity to Judge Merlin's nature, so the widely extended prospect was a need of Ishmael's spirit; his eyes must travel when his feet could not.

Feeling perfectly satisfied with his quarters, Ishmael at last left the window and made his toilet, preparatory to meeting the judge and—Claudia!

"Oh, beating heart, be still! be still!" he said to himself, as the anticipation of that latter meeting, with all its disturbing influences, sent the blood rioting through his veins.

Without being the very least dandyish, Ishmael was still fastidiously nice in his personal appointments; purity and refinement pervaded his presence.

He had completed his toilet, and was engaged in lightly brushing some lint from his black coat, when a knock at his door attracted his attention.

It was Jim, who had come to announce breakfast and show him the way to the morning room.

Down the three flights of stairs they went again, and across the central hall to a front room on the left that looked out upon the winter garden of evergreen trees. Crimson curtained and crimson carpeted, with a bright coal fire in the polished steel grate, and a glittering silver service on the white draped

breakfast table, this room had a very inviting aspect on this frosty December morning.

The judge stood with his back to the fire, and a damp newspaper open in his hand. Claudia was nowhere visible—a hasty glance around the room assured Ishmael that she had not yet entered it. Ishmael's movements were so noiseless, that his presence was not observed until he actually went up to the judge, and, bowing, accosted him with the words:

"I am here according to appointment, Judge Merlin; and hope I find you well."

"Ah! yes; good morning! how do you do, Ishmael?" said the judge, laying aside his paper and cordially shaking hands with the youth. "Punctual, I see! Had a pleasant journey?"

"Thank you, sir; very pleasant," returned Ishmael.

"Feel like setting to work this morning? There is quite an accumulation of correspondence groaning to be attended to."

"I am ready to enter upon my duties whenever you please, sir."

"All right," said the judge, touching a bell that presently summoned Jim to his presence.

"Let us have breakfast immediately. Where is Miss Merlin? Let her know that we are waiting for her."

"'Miss Merlin' is here, papa," said a rich voice at the door.

Ishmael's heart bounded and throbbed, and Claudia entered the breakfast room.

Such a picture of almost Oriental beauty, luxury and splendor as she looked! She wore a morning robe of rich crimson foulard silk, fastened up the front with garnet buttons, each a spark of fire. The dress was open at the throat and wrists, revealing glimpses of the delicate cambric collar and cuffs confined by the purest pearl studs. Her luxuriant hair was carried away from her snowy temples and drooped in long, rich, purplish, black ringlets from the back of her stately head. But her full, dark eyes and oval crimson cheeks and lips glowed with a fire too vivid for health as she advanced and gave her father the morning kiss.

"I am glad you have come, my dear! I have been waiting for you!" said the judge.

"You shall not have to do so another morning, papa," she answered.

"Here is Ishmael, Claudia," said her father, directing her attention to the youth, who had delicately withdrawn into the background; but who, at the mention of his own name, came forward to pay his respects to the heiress.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Worth," she said, extending her hand to him as he bowed before her; and then quickly detecting a passing shade of pain in his expressive face, she added, smiling:

"You know we must begin to call you Mr. Worth some time, and there can be no better time than this, when you make your first appearance in the city and commence a new career in life."

"I had hoped always to be 'Ishmael' with my friends," he replied.

"Times change and we change with them," said one of the wisest of sages," smiled Claudia.

"And coffee and muffins grow cold by standing! which is more to the present purpose," laughed Judge Merlin, handing his daughter to her seat at the head of the table, taking his own at the foot, and pointing his guest to one at the side.

When all were seated, Claudia poured out the coffee and the breakfast commenced. But to the discredit of the judge's consistency, it might have been noticed that, after he had helped his companion to steak, waffles and other edibles, he resumed his newspaper; and, regardless that coffee and muffins grew cold by standing, recommenced reading the debates in Congress.

At length, when he finished reading and saw that his companions had finished eating, he swallowed his muffin in two bolts, gulped his coffee in two draughts, and started up from the table, exclaiming:

"Now, then, Ishmael, if you are ready?"

Ishmael arose, bowed to Claudia, and turned to follow his employer.

The judge led him upstairs to a sort of office or study, immediately over the breakfast room, having an outlook over the Capitol grounds, and fitted up with a few bookcases, writing desks, and easy chairs.

The judge drew a chair to the central table, which was covered with papers, and motioned to Ishmael to take another seat at the same table. And as soon as Ishmael obeyed, Judge Merlin began to initiate him into his new duties, which, in fact, were so much of the same description with those in which he had been engaged at Tanglewood, that he very soon understood and entered upon them.

The first few days of Ishmael's sojourn were very busy ones. There was a great arrearage of correspondence; and he worked diligently, day and night, until he had brought up all arrears to the current time.

When this was accomplished, and he had but two mails to attend to in one day, he found that five hours in the morning and five in the evening sufficed for the work, and left him ample leisure for the pursuit of his legal studies, and he devoted himself to them, both by diligent reading and by regular attendance upon the sessions of the circuit court, where he watched, listened and took notes, comparing the latter with the

readings. Of course, he could not do all this without reducing his labors to a perfect system, and he could not constantly adhere to this system without practicing the severest self-denial. I tell you, young reader of this story, that in this Republic there is no "royal road" to fame and honor. The way is open to each and all of you; but it is steep and rugged; yes, and slippery; and you must toil and sweat and watch if you would reach the summit.

Would you know exactly how Ishmael managed this stage of his toilsome ascent? I will tell you. He arose at four o'clock those winter mornings, dressed quickly and went into the judge's study, where he made the fire himself, because the servants would not be astir for hours; then he sat down with the pile of letters that had come by the night's mail; he looked over the judge's hints regarding them, and then went to work and answered letters or copied documents for four hours, or until the breakfast bell rung, when he joined Claudia and her father at table. After breakfast he attended the judge in his study; submitted to his inspection the morning's work; then took them to the post office; posted them; brought back the letters that arrived by the morning's mail, and left them with the judge to be read. This would bring him to about eleven o'clock, when he went to the City Hall, to watch the proceedings of the circuit court, making careful notes and comparing them with his own private readings of law. He returned from the circuit court about two o'clock; spent the afternoon in answering the letters left for him by the judge; dined late with the family; took the second lot of letters to the post office, and returned with those that came by the evening mail; gave them to the judge for examination, and then went up to his room to spend the evening in reading law and comparing notes. He allowed himself no recreation and but little rest. His soul was sustained by what Balzac calls "The Divine patience of genius." And the more he was enabled to measure himself with other men, the more confidence he acquired in his own powers. This severe mental labor took away much of the pain of his "despised love." Ishmael was one to love strongly, ardently, constantly! But he was not one to drivel over a hopeless passion. He loved Claudia! how deeply, how purely, how faithfully, all his future life was destined to prove! And he knew that Claudia loved him; but that all the prejudices of her rank, her character and her education were warring in her bosom against this love! He knew that she appreciated his personal worth, but scorned his social position! He felt that she had resolved never, under any circumstances whatever, to marry *him*; but he trusted in her honor, never to permit her, while loving *him*, to marry another! And in the meantime, years of toil would pass; he would achieve greatness; and when the obscurity of his origin should

be lost in the light of his fame, then he would woo and win Miss Merlin!

Such were the young man's dreams, whenever in his busy, crowded, useful life he gave himself time to dream.

And meanwhile, what was the conduct of the heiress to her presumptuous lover? Coldly proud, but very respectful! For, mark you this—No one who was capable of appreciating Ishmael Worth, could possibly treat him otherwise than with respect.

CHAPTER LI.

MEANWHILE all Claudia Merlin's time was taken up with milliners, mantua-makers and jewelers. She was to make her first appearance in society at the President's first evening reception, which was to be held on Friday, the sixth of January. It was now very near the New Year, and all her intervening time was occupied in preparations for the festivities that were to attend it.

On the twenty-third of December, two days before Christmas, Mr. and Mrs. Middleton and all their family arrived. They came up by the *Columbia*, and reached Judge Merlin's house early in the morning. Consequently they were not fatigued, and the day of their arrival was a day of unalloyed pleasure and of family jubilee.

Ishmael took sympathetic part in all the rejoicings, and was caressed by Mr. and Mrs. Middleton and all their younger children as a sort of supplementary son and brother.

On Christmas Eve, also, Reuben Gray, Hannah and her children came to town in their wagon. Honest Reuben had brought a load of turkeys for the Christmas market, and had "put up" at a plain, respectable inn, much frequented by the farmers, near the market house; but in the course of the day he and his wife, leaving the children in the care of their faithful Sally, who had accompanied them in the character of nurse, called on Ishmael and brought him his trunk of wearing apparel.

The judge, in his hearty, old-fashioned, thoughtless hospitality, would have had Reuben and his family come and stop at his own house. But Reuben Gray, with all his simplicity, had the good sense firmly to decline this invitation and keep to his tavern.

"For you know, Hannah, my dear," he said to his wife, when they found themselves again at the "Plough," "we would bother the family more'n the judge reckoned on. What could they do with us? Where could they put us? As to axing of us in the drawing-room or sitting of us down in the dining room, with all his fine, fashionable friends, that wasn't to be

thought on! And as to *you* being put into the kitchen, along of the servants, that *I* wouldn't allow! Now the judge, he didn't think of all these things; but I did; and I was right to decline the invitation, don't you think so?"

"Of course you were, Reuben, and if you hadn't declined it, I would, and that I tell you," answered Mrs. Gray.

"And so, Hannah, my dear, we will just keep our Christmas where we are! We won't deprive Ishmael of his grand Christmas dinner with his grand friends! but we will ax him to come over and go to the playhouse with us and see the play, and then we'll all come back and have a nice supper all on us together. We'll have a roast turkey and mince pie and eggnog and apple toddy, my dear, and make a night of it, once in a way! What do you think?"

"I think that will be all very well, Reuben, so that you don't take too much of that same said eggnog and apply toddy," replied Mrs. Gray.

"Now, Hannah, did you ever know me to do such a thing?" inquired Reuben, with an injured air.

"No, Reuben, I never did! But I think that a man that even so much as touches spiritable likkers is never safe until he is in his grave," said Mrs. Gray, solemnly.

"Where he can never get no more!" sighed Reuben; and as he had to attend the market to sell his turkeys that night, he left Hannah and went to put his horses to the wagon.

So fine a trade did Reuben drive with his fat turkeys that he came home at ten with an empty wagon and full pocketbook, and told Hannah that she might have a new black silk "gownd," and Sally should have a red calico "un," and as for the children, they should have an outfit from head to foot.

Christmas morning dawned gloriously. All the little Middletons were made happy by the fruit of the Christmas tree. In the many kind interchanges of gifts Ishmael was not entirely forgotten. Some loving heart had remembered him. Some skillful hand had worked for him. When he went up to his room after breakfast on Christmas morning he saw upon his dressing table a packet directed to himself. On opening it he found a fine pocket handkerchief neatly hemmed and marked, a pair of nice gloves, a pair of home-knit socks and a pair of embroidered slippers. Here were no useless fancy trumpery; all were useful articles; and in the old-fashioned, housewifely present, Ishmael recognized the thoughtful heart and careful hand of Bee, and grateful, affectionate tears filled his eyes. He went below stairs to a back parlor, where he felt sure he should find Bee presiding over the indoor amusements of her younger brothers and sisters.

And sure enough there the pretty little motherly maiden was among the children.

Ishmael went straight up to her, saying, in fervent tones:

"I thank you, Bee; I thank you very much for remembering me!"

"Why, who should remember you if not I, Ishmael? Are you not like one of ourselves? And should I forget you any sooner than I should forget Walter, or James, or John?" said Bee, with a pleasant smile.

"Ah, Bee! I have neither mother nor sister to think of me at festive times; but you, dear Bee, you make me forget the need of either."

"You have 'neither mother nor sister,' Ishmael? Now, do not think so, while my dear mother and myself live; for I am sure she loves you as a son, Ishmael, and I love you—as a brother," answered Bee, speaking comfort to the lonely youth from the depths of her own pure, kind heart. But ah! the intense blush that followed her words might have revealed to an interested observer how much more than any brother she loved Ishmael Worth!

Judge Merlin, Claudia, Mr. and Mrs. Middleton and Ishmael, went to church.

Bee stayed home to see that the nurses took proper care of the children.

They had a family Christmas dinner.

And after that Ishmael excused himself, and went over to the "Plough," to spend the evening with Reuben and Hannah. That evening the three friends went to the theater, and saw their first play—"The Comedy of Errors"—together. And it did many an old, satiated playgoer good to see the hearty zest with which honest Reuben enjoyed the fun. Nor was Hannah or Ishmael much behind him in their keen appreciation of the piece; only, at those passages at which Hannah and Ishmael only smiled, Reuben rubbed his knees, and laughed aloud, startling all the audience.

"It's a good thing I don't live in the city, Hannah, my dear, for I would go to the play every night!" said Reuben, as they left the theater at the close of the performance.

"And it is a good thing you don't, Reuben, for it would be the ruination of you!" admitted Hannah.

They went back to the "Plough," where the Christmas supper was served for them in the plain little private sitting room. After partaking moderately of its delicacies, Ishmael bade them good night, and returned home.

Reuben and Hannah stayed a week in the city. Reuben took her about to see all the sights and to shop in all the stores. And on New Year's day, when the President received the public, Reuben took Hannah to the White House, to "pay their duty" to the chief magistrate of the nation. And the day after New Year's day, they took leave of Ishmael and of all their

friends and returned home, delighted with the memory of their pleasant visit to the city.

Ishmael, after all these interruptions, returned with new zest to his duties, and, as before, worked diligently day and night.

Claudia went deeper into her preparations for her first appearance in society, at the President's first drawing-room of the season.

The night of nights for the heiress came. After dinner Claudia indulged herself with a long nap, so that she might be quite fresh in the evening. When she woke up she took a cup of tea, and immediately retired to her chamber to dress.

Mrs. Middleton superintended her toilet.

Claudia wore a rich point-lace dress over a white satin skirt. The wreath that crowned her head, the necklace that reposed upon her bosom, the bracelets that clasped her arms, the girdle that inclosed her waist, and the bunches of flowers that festooned her upper lace dress, were all of the same rich pattern—lilies of the valley, whose blossoms were formed of pearl, whose leaves were of emeralds, and whose dew was of diamonds. Snowy gloves and snowy shoes completed this toilet, the effect of which was rich, chaste and elegant beyond description. Mrs. Middleton wore a superb dress of ruby-colored velvet.

When they were both quite ready, they went down into the drawing-room, where Judge Merlin, Mr. Middleton and Ishmael were awaiting them, and where Claudia's splendid presence suddenly dazzled them. Mr. Middleton and Judge Merlin gazed upon the radiant beauty with undisguised admiration. And Ishmael looked on with a deep, unuttered groan. How dared he love this stately, resplendent queen? How dared he hope she would ever deign to notice him? But the next instant he reproached himself for the groan and the doubt—how could he have been so fooled by a mere shimmer of satin and glitter of jewels?

Judge Merlin and Mr. Middleton were in the conventional evening dress of gentlemen, and were quite ready to attend the ladies. They had nothing to do, therefore, but to hand them to the carriage, which they accordingly did. The party of four—Mr. and Mrs. Middleton, Judge Merlin and Claudia—drove off.

Ishmael and Beatrice remained at home. Ishmael to study his law books; Beatrice to give the boys their supper and see that the nurses took proper care of the children.

CHAPTER. III.

THE carriage rolled along Pennsylvania Avenue. The weather had changed since sunset, and the evening was misty with a light, drizzling rain. Yet still the scene was a gay, busy and

enlivening one; the gas lamps that lighted the avenue gleamed brightly through the rain drops like smiles through tears; the sidewalks were filled with pedestrians, and the middle of the street with vehicles—all going in one direction—to the President's palace.

A decorously slow drive of fifteen minutes brought our party through this gay scene to a gayer one at the north gate of the President's park, where a great crowd of carriages was drawn up, waiting their turn to drive in.

The gates were open and lighted by four tall lamps placed upon the posts, and which illuminated the whole scene.

Judge Merlin's carriage drew up on the outskirts of this crowd of vehicles, to wait his turn to enter; but he soon found himself inclosed in the center of the assemblage by other carriages that had come after his own. He had to wait full fifteen minutes before he could fall into the procession that was slowly making its way through the right-hand gate, and along the lighted circular avenue that led up to the front entrance of the palace. Even on this misty night, the grounds were gayly illuminated and well filled. But crowded as the scene was, the utmost order prevailed. The carriages that came up the right-hand avenue full of visitors discharged them at the entrance hall and rolled away empty down the left-hand avenue; so that there was a continuous procession of full carriages coming up one way and empty carriages going down the other.

At length Judge Merlin's carriage, coming slowly along in the line, drew up in its turn before the front of the mansion. The whole façade of the White House was splendidly illuminated, as if to express in radiant light a smiling welcome! The halls were occupied by attentive officers who received the visitors and ushered them into cloak rooms. Within the house also, great as the crowd of visitors was, the most perfect order prevailed.

Judge Merlin and his party were received by a civil, respectable official, who directed them to a cloak room; and they soon found themselves in a close, orderly crowd moving thitherward. When the gentlemen had succeeded in convoying their ladies safely to this bourne and seen them well over its threshold, they retired to the receptacle where they were to leave their hats and overcoats before coming back to take their parties into the saloon.

In the ladies' cloak room, Claudia and her chaperone found themselves in a brilliant, impracticable crowd. There were about half a dozen tall dressing glasses in the place, and about half a hundred young ladies were trying to smooth braids and ringlets and adjust wreaths and coronets by their aid. And there were about half a hundred more in the center of the room; some taking off opera cloaks, shaking out flounces, and wait-

ing their turns to go to the mirrors; and some, quite ready and waiting the appearance of their escort at the door to take them to the saloon; and beside these some were coming in and some were passing out continually; and through the open doors the crowds of those newly arriving and the crowds of those passing on to the reception rooms, were always visible.

Claudia looked upon this seething multitude with a shudder.

"What a scene!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, but with all, what order! There never has been such order and system in these crowded receptions as now under the management of Mrs. —" said Mrs. Middleton, naming the accomplished lady who, that season, ruled the domestic affairs of the White House.

As Mrs. Middleton and Claudia had finished their toilets, to the sticking of the very last pin, before leaving their dressing rooms at home, they had now nothing to do but to give their opera cloaks to a woman in attendance and then stand near the door to watch for the appearance of Judge Merlin and Mr. Middleton. They had but a few minutes to wait. The gentlemen soon came and gave their arms to their ladies and led them to join the throng that were slowly making their way through the crowded halls and anterooms toward the audience chamber, where the President received his visitors. It was a severe ordeal, the passage of those halls. Our party, like all their companions, were pressed forward in the crowd until they were fairly pushed into the presence chamber, known as the small crimson drawing-room, in which the President and his family waited to receive their visitors.

Yes! there he stood! the majestic old man, with his kingly gray head bared, and his stately form clothed in the Republican citizen's dress of simple black! There he stood, fresh from the victories of a score of well-fought fields, receiving the meed of honor won by his years, his patriotism and his courage! A crowd of admirers perpetually passed before him; by the orderly arrangement of the ushers, they came up on the right-hand side, bowed or courtesied before him, received a cordial shake of the hand, a smile and a few kind words, and then passed on to the left toward the great saloon commonly known as the East Room. Perhaps never has any President since Washington made himself so much beloved by the people as did General — during his short administration. Great love-compelling power had that dignified and benignant old man! Fit to be the chief magistrate of a great, free people he was! At least so thought Judge Merlin's daughter as she courtesied before him, received the cordial shake of his hand, heard the kind tones of his voice say—"I am very glad to see you, my dear"—and passed on with the throng who were proceeding toward the East Room.

Once arrived in that magnificent room, they found space

enough even for that vast crowd to move about in. This room is too well known to the public to need any labored description. For the information of those who have never seen it, it is sufficient to say that its dimensions are magnificent, its decorations superb, its furniture luxurious, and its illuminations splendid. Three enormous chandeliers, like constellations, flooded the scene with light, and a fine brass band, somewhere out of sight, filled the air with music. A brilliant company enlivened, but did not crowd, the room. There were assembled beautiful girls, handsome women, gorgeous old ladies; there were officers of the army and of the navy in their full-dress uniforms; there were the diplomatic corps of all foreign nations in the costumes of their several ranks and countries; there were grave senators and wise judges and holy divines; there were Indian chiefs in their beads and blankets; there were adventurous Poles from Warsaw; exiled Bourbons from Paris; and Comanche braves from the Cordilleras. There was, in fact, such a curious assemblage as can be met with nowhere on the face of the earth but in the east drawing-room of our President's palace on a great reception evening!

Into this motley but splendid assemblage Judge Merlin led his beautiful daughter. At first her entrance attracted no attention; but when one, and then another, noticed the dazzling new star of beauty that had so suddenly risen above their horizon, a whisper arose that soon grew into a general buzz of admiration that attended Claudia in her progress through the room and heralded her approach to those at the upper end. And—

“Who is she?” “Who can she be?” were the low-toned questions that reached her ear as her father led her to a sofa and rested her upon it. But these questions came only from those who were strangers in Washington. Of course all others knew the person of Judge Merlin, and surmised the young lady on his arm to be his daughter.

Soon after the judge and his party were seated, his friends began to come forward to pay their respects to him, and to be presented to his beautiful daughter.

Claudia received all these with a self-possession, grace and fascination, peculiarly her own.

There was no doubt about it!—Miss Merlin's entrance into society had been a great success; she had made a sensation.

Among those presented to Miss Merlin on that occasion was the Honorable — — —, the British Minister. He was young, handsome, accomplished, and a bachelor! Consequently he was a target for all the shafts of Cupid that ladies' eyes could send.

He offered his arm to Miss Merlin for a promenade through the room. She accepted it, and became as much the envy of every unmarried lady present, as if the offer made and accepted had been for a promenade through life!

No such thought, however, was in the young English Minister's mind; for after making the circuit of the room two or three times, he brought his companion back, and, with a smile and a bow, left her in the care of her father.

But if the people were inclined to feed their envy, they found plenty of food for that appetite. A few minutes after Miss Merlin had resumed her seat, a general buzz of voices announced some new event of interest. It turned out to be the entrance of the President and his family into the East Room.

For some good reason or other, known only to his own friendly heart, the President, sauntering leisurely, dispensing bows, smiles and kind words as he passed, went straight up to the sofa whereon his old friend, Judge Merlin, sat, took a seat beside him, and entered into conversation.

Ah! their talk was not about state affairs, foreign or domestic policy, duties, imports, war, peace—no! their talk was of their boyhood's days, spent together; of the holidays they had had; of the orchards they had robbed; of the well-merited thrashings they had got; and of the good old schoolmaster, long since dust and ashes, who had lectured and flogged them.

Claudia listened, and loved the old man more—that he could turn from the memory of his bloody victories, the presence of his political cares, and the prospects of a divided cabinet, to refresh himself with the green reminiscences of his boyhood's days. It was impossible for the young girl to feel so much sympathy without betraying it and attracting the attention of the old man. He looked at her. He had shaken hands with her, and said that he was glad to see her, when she was presented to him in his presence chamber; but he had not really seen her; she had been only one of the passing crowd of courtesiers for whom he felt a wholesale kindness and expressed a wholesale good will; now, however, he looked at her—now he saw her!

Sixty-five years had whitened the hair of General —, but he was not insensible to the charms of beauty; nor unconscious of his own power of conferring honor upon beauty.

Rising, therefore, with all the stately courtesy of the old school gentleman, he offered his arm to Miss Merlin for a promenade through the rooms.

With a sweet smile, Claudia arose, and once more became the cynosure of all eyes and the envy of all hearts! A few turns through the rooms, and the President brought the beauty back, seated her, and took his own seat beside her on the sofa.

But the cup of bitterness for the envious was not yet full! Another hum and buzz went around the room, announcing some new event of great interest; which seemed to be a late arrival of much importance.

Presently the British Minister and another gentleman were

seen approaching the sofa where sat the President, Judge Merlin, Miss Merlin, and Mr. and Mrs. Middleton. They paused immediately before the President, when the Minister said:

"Your Excellency, permit me to present to you the Viscount Vincent, late from London."

The President arose and heartily shook hands with the young foreigner, cordially saying:

"I am happy to see you, my lord; happy to welcome you to Washington."

The viscount bowed low before the gray-haired old hero, saying, in a low tone:

"I am glad to see the President of the United States; but I am proud to shake the hand of the conqueror of—of—"

The viscount paused, his memory suddenly failed him, for the life and soul of him he could not remember the jaw-breaking, ear-splitting names of those bloody fields where the General had won his laurels.

The President gracefully covered the hesitation of the viscount, and evaded his compliment at the same time by turning to the ladies of his party and presenting his guest, saying:

"Mrs. Middleton, Lord Vincent. Miss Merlin, Lord Vincent."

The viscount bowed low to these ladies, who courtesied in a graceful manner in return.

"My old friend, Judge Merlin, Lord Vincent," then said the plain, matter-of-fact old President.

The judge and the viscount simultaneously bowed, and then, these formalities being over, seats were found for the two strangers, and the whole group fell into an easy chat—subject of discussion the old question that is sure to be argued whenever the old world and the new meet—the rival merits of monarchies and republics. The discussion grew warm; though the disputants remained courteous. The viscount grew bored and gradually dropped out of the argument, leaving the subject in the hands of the President and the Minister, who, of course, had taken opposite sides, the Minister representing the advantages of a monarchical form of government, and the President contending for a republican one. The viscount noticed that a large portion of the company were promenading in a procession round and round the room to the music of one of Beethoven's grand marches. It was monotonous enough; but it was better than sitting there and listening to the vexed question, whether "the peoples" were capable of governing themselves. So he turned to Miss Merlin with a bow and smile, saying:

"Shall we join the promenade? Will you so far honor ~~me?~~"

"With pleasure, my lord," replied Miss Merlin.

And he rose and gave her his arm, and they walked away. And for the third time that evening, Claudia became the target of all sorts of glances—glances of admiration, glances of hate! She had been led out by the young English Minister; then by the old President; and now she was promenading with the lion of the evening, the only titled person at this republican court, the Viscount Vincent. And she a newcomer, a mere girl, not twenty years old! It was intolerable, thought all the ladies, young and old, married or single.

But if the beautiful Claudia was the envy of all the women, the "handsome" Vincent was not less the envy of all the men present. "Puppy"; "Coxcomb"; "Jack-an-ape"; "Swell"; "Viscount, indeed! More probably, some foreign blackleg, or barber"; "It is perfectly ridiculous the manner in which American girls throw themselves under the feet of these titled foreign paupers," were some of the low-breathed blessings bestowed upon young Lord Vincent. And yet these expletives were not intended to be half so malignant as they might have sounded. They were but the impulsive expressions of transient vexation at seeing the very pearl of beauty, on the first evening of her appearance, carried off by an alien.

In truth, the viscount and the heiress were a very handsome couple; and notwithstanding all the envy felt for them, all eyes followed them with secret admiration. The beautiful Claudia was a rare type of the young American girl—tall, slender, graceful, dark-haired, dark-eyed, with a rich, glowing bloom on cheeks and lips. And her snow-white dress of misty lace over shining satin, and her gleaming pearls and sparkling diamonds set off her beauty well. Vincent was a fine specimen of the young English gentleman—tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested; with a stately head; a fair, roseate complexion; light-brown, curling hair and beard; and clear, blue eyes. And his simple evening dress of speckless black became him well. His manners were graceful, his voice pleasant, and his conversation brilliant; but, alas, for Claudia! the greatest charm he possessed for her was—his title! Claudia knew another, handsomer, more graceful, more brilliant, than this viscount; but that other was unknown, untitled and unnamed in the world. The viscount was so engrossed with his beautiful companion, that it was some time before he observed that the company was dropping off and the room was half empty. He then led Miss Merlin back to her party, took a slight leave of them all, bowed to the President and departed.

Judge Merlin, who had only waited for his daughter, now arose to go. His party made their adieu and left the saloon. As so many of the guests had already gone, they found the halls and anterooms comparatively free of crowds, and easily made their way to the gentlemen's cloak room and the ladies'

dressing room, and thence to the entrance hall. Mr. Middleton went out to call the carriage, which was near at hand. And the whole party entered and drove homeward. The sky had not cleared, the drizzle still continued; but the lamps gleamed brightly through the rain drops, and the avenue was as gay at midnight as it had been at midday. As the carriage rolled along, Judge Merlin and Mr. and Mrs. Middleton discussed the reception, the President, the company, and especially the young English viscount.

"He is the son and heir of the Earl of Hurstmonceux, whose estates lie somewhere in the rich county of Sussex. The title did not come to the present earl in the direct line of descent. The late earl died childless, at a very advanced age; and the title fell to his distant relation, Lord Banff, the father of this young man, whose estates lie away up in the north of Scotland somewhere. Thus the Scottish Lord Banff became Earl of Hurstmonceux, and his eldest son, our new acquaintance, took the second title in the family and became Lord Vincent," said Judge Merlin.

"The English Minister gave you this information?" inquired Mr. Middleton.

"Yes, he did; I suppose he thought it but right to put me in possession of all such facts in relation to a young foreigner whom he had been instrumental in introducing to my family. But, by the way, Middleton—*Hurstmonceux*? Was not that the title of the young dowager countess whom Brudenell married and parted with, years ago?"

"Yes; and I suppose that she was the widow of that very old man, the late Earl of Hurstmonceux, who died childless; in fact, she must have been."

"I wonder whatever became of her?"

"I do not know; I know nothing whatever about the *last* Countess of Hurstmonceux; but I know very well who has a fair prospect of becoming the *next* Countess of Hurstmonceux, if she pleases!" replied Mr. Middleton with a merry glance at his niece.

Claudia, who had been a silent, thoughtful and attentive listener to their conversation, did not reply, but smothered a sigh and turned to look out of the window. The carriage was just drawing up before their own gate.

The whole face of the house was closed and darkened, except one little light that burned in a small front window at the very top of the house.

It was Ishmael's lamp; and as plainly as if she had been in his room, Claudia, in imagination, saw the pale young face bent studiously over the volume lying open before him.

With another inward sigh, Claudia gave her hand to her uncle, who had left the carriage to help her out. And then

the whole party entered the house, where they were admitted by the sleepy Jim.

And in another half hour they were all in repose.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE next morning, Ishmael and Bee, the only real hard workers in the family, were the first to make their appearance in the breakfast room. They had both been up for hours—Ishmael in the library, answering letters, and Bee in the nursery, seeing that the young children were properly washed, dressed and fed. And now, at the usual hour, they came down, a little hungry and impatient for the morning meal. But for some time no one joined them. All seemed to be sleeping off the night's dissipation. Bee waited nearly an hour, and then said:

"Ishmael, I will not detain you longer. I know that you wish to get to the courthouse, to watch the Emerson trial; so I will ring for breakfast. Industrious people must not be hindered by the tardiness of lazy ones," she added, with a smile, as she put her hand to the bell cord.

Ishmael was about to protest against the breakfast being hurried on his account, when the matter was settled by the entrance of Judge Merlin, followed by Mr. Middleton and Claudia. After the morning salutations had passed, the judge said:

"You may ring for breakfast, Claudia, my dear. We will not wait for your aunt, since your uncle tells us that she is too tired to rise this morning."

But as Bee had already rung, the coffee and muffins soon made their appearance, and the family gathered around the table.

Beside Claudia's plate lay a weekly paper, which, as soon as she had helped her companions to coffee, she took up to read. It was a lively, gossiping little paper of that day, published every Saturday morning, under the somewhat sounding title of *The Republican Court Journal*, and it gave, in addition to the news of the world, the doings of the fashionable circles. This number of the paper contained a long description of the President's drawing-room of the preceding evening. And as Claudia read it, she smiled and broke in silvery laughter.

Everyone looked up.

"What is it, my dear?" inquired the judge.

"Let us have it, Claudia," said Mr. Middleton.

"Oh, papa! oh, uncle! I really cannot read it out—it is too absurd! Is there no way, I wonder, of stopping these reporters from giving their auction-block schedule of one's height, figure,

complexion, and all that? Here, Bee—you read it, my dear," said Claudia, handing it to her cousin.

Bee took the paper and cast her eyes over the article in question; but as she did so, her cheek crimsoned with blushes, and she laid the paper down.

"Read it, Bee," said Claudia.

"I cannot," answered Beatrice, coldly.

"Why not?"

"It makes my eyes burn even to see it! Oh, Claudia, how dare they take such liberties with your name?"

"Why, every word of it is praise—high praise."

"It is fulsome, offensive flattery."

"Oh, you jealous little imp!" said Miss Merlin, laughing.

"Yes, Claudia, I *am* jealous! not *of* you; but *for* you—for your delicacy and dignity," said Beatrice, gravely.

"And you think, then, I have been wronged by this public notice?" inquired the heiress, half wounded and half offended by the words of her cousin.

"I do," answered Beatrice, gravely.

"As if I cared! Queens of society, like other sovereigns, must be so taxed for their popularity, Miss Middleton!" said Claudia, half laughingly and half defiantly.

Bee made no reply.

But Mr. Middleton extended his hand, saying:

"Give me the paper. Claudia is a little too independent, and Bee a little too fastidious, for either to be a fair judge of what is right and proper in this matter; so we will see for ourselves, judge."

Judge Merlin nodded assent.

Mr. Middleton read the article aloud. It was really a very lively description of the President's evening reception—interesting to those who had not been present; more interesting to those who had; and most interesting of all to those who found themselves favorably noticed. To the last-mentioned the notice was fame—for a day! The article was two or three columns in length; but we will quote only a few lines. One paragraph said:

"Among the distinguished guests present was the young Viscount Vincent, eldest son and heir of the Earl of Hurstmonceux and Banff. He was presented by the British Minister."

Another paragraph alluded to Claudia in these terms:

"The belle of the evening, beyond all competition, was the beautiful Miss M—n, only daughter and heiress of Judge M—n, of the Supreme Court. It will be remembered that the blood of Pocahontas runs in this young beauty's veins, giving luster to her raven black hair, light to her dusky eyes, fire to her brown

cheeks, and majesty and grace to all her movements. She is truly an Indian princess."

"Well," said Mr. Middleton, laying down the paper, "I agree with Bee! It is really too bad to be trotted out in this way, and have all your points indicated, and then be dubbed with a fancy name besides! Why, Miss Merlin, they will call you the 'Indian Princess' to the end of time, or of your Washington campaign!"

Claudia tossed her head.

"What odds?" she asked. "I am rather proud to be of the royal lineage of Powhatan! They may call me Indian princess, if they like! I will accept the title!"

"Until you get a more legitimate one!" laughed Mr. Middleton.

"Until I get a more legitimate one," assented Claudia.

"But I will see McQuill, the reporter of the *Journal*, and ask him as a particular favor to leave my daughter's name out of his next balloon full of gas!" laughed the judge, as he arose from the table.

The other members of the family followed. And each went about his or her own particular business. This day being the next following the first appearance of Miss Merlin in society, was passed quietly in the family.

The next day, being Sunday, they all attended church.

But on Monday a continual stream of visitors arrived, and a great number of cards were left at Judge Merlin's door.

In the course of the week Claudia returned all these calls, and thus she was fairly launched into fashionable life.

She received numerous invitations to dinners, evening parties and balls; but all these she civilly excused herself from attending; for it was her whim to give a large party before going to any. To this end, she forced her aunt Middleton to issue cards and make preparations on a grand scale for a very magnificent ball.

"It must eclipse everything else that has been done, or can be done, this season!" said Claudia.

"Humph!" answered Mrs. Middleton.

"We must have Dureezie's celebrated band for the music, you know!"

"My dear, he charges a thousand dollars a night, to leave New York and play for anyone!"

"Well? what if it were two thousand—ten thousand? I will have him! Tell Ishmael to write to him at once!"

"Very well, my dear! You are spending your own money, remember!"

"Who cares? I will be the only one who engages Dureezie's famous music! And, Aunt Middleton?"

"Well, my dear?"

"Vourienne must decorate the rooms!"

"My dear, his charges are enormous!"

"So is my fortune, Aunt Middleton!" laughed Claudia.

"Very well," sighed the lady.

"And—aunt?"

"Yes, dear?"

"Devizac must supply the supper."

"Claudia, you are mad! Everything that man touches turns to gold—for his own pocket!"

Claudia shrugged her shoulders.

"Aunt, what do I care for all that! I can afford it! As long as he can hold out to charge, I can hold out to pay! I mean to enjoy my fortune, and live while I live!"

"Ah, my dear! wealth was given for other purposes than the enjoyment of its possessor!" sighed Mrs. Middleton.

"I know it, aunty! It was given for the advancement of its possessor! I have another object besides enjoyment in view! I say, aunty!"

"Well, my child?"

"We must be very careful whom we have here!"

"Of course, my dear."

"We must have the best people."

"Certainly."

"We must invite the diplomatic corps."

"By all means."

"And—all foreigners of distinction, who may be present in the city."

"Yes, my love."

"We must not forget to invite—"

"Who, my dear?"

"Lord Vincent."

"Humph! Has he called here?"

"He left his card a week ago."

The day succeeding this conversation, the cards of invitation to the Merlin ball were issued.

And in ten days the ball came off.

It was—as Miss Merlin had resolved it should be—the most splendid affair of the kind that has ever been seen in Washington, before or since. It cost a small fortune, of course, but it was unsurpassed and unsurpassable. Even to this day it is remembered as the great ball. As Claudia had determined, Vourienne superintended the decorations of the reception, dancing and supper rooms; Devizac furnished the refreshment; and Dureezie the music. The élite of the city were present. The guests began to assemble at ten o'clock, and by eleven the rooms were crowded.

Among the guests was he for whom all this pageantry had been got up—the Viscount Vincent.

With excellent taste, Claudia had on this occasion avoided display in her own personal appointments. She wore a snow-white, mistlike tulle over white glacé silk, that floated cloud-like around her with every movement of her graceful form. She wore no jewelry, but upon her head a simple wither of the cypress vine, whose small green leaves and tiny crimson buds contrasted well with her raven black hair. Yet never in all the splendor of her richest dress and rarest jewels had she looked more beautiful. The same good taste that governed her unassuming toilet, withheld her from taking any prominent part in the festivities of the evening. She was courteous to all, solicitous for the comfort of her guests, yet not too officious. As if only to do honor to the most distinguished stranger present, she danced with the Viscount Vincent *once*; and after that declined all invitations to the floor. Nor did Lord Vincent dance again. He seemed to prefer to devote himself to his lovely young hostess for the evening. The viscount was the lion of the party, and his exclusive attention to the heiress could not escape observation. Everyone noticed and commented upon it. Nor was Claudia insensible to the honor of being the object of this exclusive devotion from his lordship. She was pleased and flattered, and whenever Claudia was in this state of mind her beauty became perfectly radiant.

Among those who watched the incipient flirtation commencing between the viscount and the heiress was Beatrice Middleton. She had come late. She had had all the children to see properly fed and put to bed before she could begin to dress herself. And one restless little brother had kept her by his crib singing songs and telling stories until ten o'clock before he finally dropped off to sleep, and left her at liberty to go to her room and dress herself for the ball. Her dress was simplicity itself — a plain white tarlatan with white ribbons; but it well became the angelic purity of her type of beauty. Her golden ringlets and sapphire eyes were the only jewels she wore, the roses on her cheeks the only flowers. When she entered the dancing room she saw four quadrilles in active progress on the floor; and about four hundred spectators crowded along the walls, some sitting, some standing, some reclining, and some grouped. She passed on, greeting courteously those with whom she had a speaking acquaintance, smiling kindly upon others, and observing all. In this way she reached the group of which Claudia Merlin and Lord Vincent formed the center. A cursory glance showed her that one for whom she looked was not among them. With a bow and a smile to the group she turned away, and went up to where Judge Merlin stood for the moment alone.

“Uncle,” she said, in a tone slightly reproachful, “is not Ishmael to be with us this evening?”

"My dear, I invited him to join us, but he excused himself."

"Of course, naturally he would do so at first, thinking doubtless that you asked him as a mere matter of form. Uncle, considering his position, you ought to have pressed him to come. You ought not to have permitted him to excuse himself, if you really were in earnest with your invitation. Were you in earnest, sir?"

"Why, of course I was, my dear! Why shouldn't I have been? I should have been really glad to see the young man here enjoy himself this evening."

"Have I your authority for saying so much to Ishmael, even now, uncle?" inquired Bee, eagerly.

"Certainly, my love! Go and oust him from his den. Bring him down here, if you like, and if you can," said the judge, cheerily.

Bee left him, glided like a spirit through the crowd, passed from the room and went upstairs, flight after flight, until she reached the third floor, and rapped at the door of Ishmael's "den."

"Come in," said the rich, deep, sweet voice—always sweet in its tones, whether addressing man, woman or child—human being or dumb brute—"Come in."

Bee entered the little chamber, so dark after the lighted rooms below.

In the recess of the dormer window, at a small table lighted by one candle, sat Ishmael, bending over an open volume. His cheek was pale, his expression weary. He looked up, and recognizing Bee, arose with a smile to meet her.

"How dark you are up here, all alone, Ishmael!" she said, coming forward.

Ishmael snuffed his candle, picked the wick, and set it up on his pile of books that it might give a better light, and then turned again smilingly toward Bee, offered her a chair, and stood as if waiting her commands.

"What are you doing up here alone, Ishmael?" she inquired, with her hand upon the back of the chair that she omitted to take.

"I am studying 'Kent's Commentaries,'" answered the young man.

"I wish you would study your own health a little more, Ishmael! Why are you not down with us?"

"My dear Bee, I am better here."

"Nonsense, Ishmael! You are here too much! You confine yourself too closely to study! You should remember the plain old proverb—(proverbs are the wisdom of nations, you know)—the old proverb which says: 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' Come!"

"My dear friend, Bee, you must excuse me."

"But I will not."

"Bee——"

"I insist upon your coming, Ishmael!"

"Bee, do not. I should be the wrong man in the wrong place!"

"Now, why do you say that?"

"Because I have no business in a ballroom, Bee."

"You have as much business there as anyone else!"

"What should I do there, Bee?"

"Dance! waltz! polka! At our school balls you were one of the best dancers we had, I recollect. Now, with your memory and you ear for music, you would do as well as then."

"But who would dance with me in Washington, dear Bee? I am a total stranger to everyone out of this family. And I have no right to ask an introduction to any of the belles," said Ishmael.

"I will dance with you, Ishmael, to begin with, if you will accept me as a partner. And I do not think you will venture to refuse your little adopted sister and old playmate! Come, Ishmael."

"Dearest little sister, do you know that I declined Judge Merlin's invitation?"

"Yes, he told me so, and sent me here to say to you that he will not excuse you, that he insists upon your coming. Come, Ishmael!"

"Dear Bee, you constrain me! I will come! Yes, and I confess I am *glad* to be 'constrained.' Sometimes, dear, we require to be compelled to do as we like; or, in other words, our consciences require just excuses for yielding certain points to our inclinations. I have been secretly wishing to be with you all the evening. The distant sound of the music has been alluring me very persuasively. (That is a magnificent band of Dureezie's, by the way.) I have been longing to join the festivities. And I am glad, my little liege lady, that you lay your royal commands on me to do so."

"That is right, Ishmael! I must say that you yield gracefully! Well, I will leave you now to prepare your toilet. And—Ishmael?"

"Yes, Bee?"

"Ring for more light! You will never be able to render yourself irresistible with the aid of a single candle on one side of your glass," said Bee, as she made her laughing exit.

Ishmael followed her advice in every particular, and soon made himself ready to appear in the ball. When just about to leave the room he thought of his gloves, and doubted whether he had a pair for drawing-room use. Then suddenly he recollects Bee's Christmas present that he had laid away as something too sacred for use. He went and took from the parcel

the straw-colored kid gloves she had given him, and drew them on as he descended the stairs, whispering to himself:

“Even for these I am indebted to her—may Heaven bless her!”

CHAPTER LIV.

A VERY handsome young fellow was Ishmael Worth as he entered the drawing-room that evening. He had attained his full height, over six feet, and he had grown broad-shouldered and full-chested, with the prospect of becoming the athletic man of majestic presence that he appeared in riper years. His hair and eyes were growing much darker; you might now call the first dark brown and the last dark gray. His face was somewhat fuller; but his forehead was still high, broad and massive, and the line of his profile was clear cut, distinct and classic; his lips were full and beautifully curved; and, to sum up, he still retained the peculiar charm of his countenance—the habit of smiling only with his eyes. How intense is the light of a smile that is confined to the eyes only. His dress is not worth notice. All gentlemen dress alike for evening parties; all wear the stereotyped black dress coat, light kid gloves, etc., etc., etc., and he wore the uniform for such cases made and provided. Only everything that Ishmael put on looked like the costume of a prince.

He entered the lighted and crowded drawing-room very hesitatingly, looking over that splendid but confused assemblage until he caught the eye of Judge Merlin, who immediately came forward to meet him, saying in a low tone:

“I am glad you changed your mind and decided to come down. You must become acquainted with some of *my* acquaintances. You must make friends, Ishmael, as well as gain knowledge, if you would advance yourself. Come along!”

And the judge led him into the thick of the crowd.

Little more than a year before the judge had said, in speaking of Ishmael—“Of course, owing to the circumstances of his birth, he never can hope to attain the position of a gentleman, never.” But the judge had forgotten all about that now. People usually did forget Ishmael’s humble origin in his exalted presence. I use the word “exalted” with truth, as it applied to his air and manner. The judge certainly forgot that Ishmael was not Society’s gentleman as well as “Nature’s nobleman,” when, taking him through the crowd, he said:

“I shall introduce you to some young ladies. The first one I present you to will be Miss Tourneysee, the daughter of General Tourneysee. You must immediately ask her to dance; etiquette will require you to do so.”

"But," smiled Ishmael, "I am already engaged to dance the next set with Bee."

"You verdant youth! So probably, is *she*—Miss Tourneysee, I mean—engaged ten sets deep. Ask her for the honor of her hand as soon as she is disengaged," replied the judge, who straightway led Ishmael up to a very pretty young girl, in blue crépe, to whom he presented the young man in due form.

Ishmael bowed and proffered his petition.

The case was not so hopeless as the judge had represented it to be. Miss Tourneysee was engaged for the next three sets, but would be happy to dance the fourth with Mr. Worth.

At that moment the partner to whom she was engaged for the quadrille, then forming, came up to claim her hand, and she arose and slightly courtesied to Judge Merlin and Ishmael Worth, and walked away with her companion.

Ishmael looked around for his own lovely partner, and Bee, smiling at a little distance, caught his eye. He bowed to Judge Merlin and went up to her and led her to the head of one of the sets about to be formed.

In the meantime—

"Who is he?" whispered many voices, while many eyes followed the stranger who had come among them.

Among those who observed the entrance of Ishmael was the Viscount Vincent. Half bending, in an elegant attitude, with his white-gloved hand upon the arm of the sofa where Miss Merlin reclined, he watched the stranger. Presently he said to her:

"Excuse me; but—who is that very distinguished-looking individual?"

"Who?" inquired Claudia. She had not noticed the entrance of Ishmael.

"He who just now came in the room—with Judge Merlin, I think. There, he is now standing up, with that pretty little creature in white with the golden ringlets."

"Oh," said Claudia, following his glance. "That 'pretty little creature' is my cousin, Miss Middleton."

"I beg ten thousand pardons," said Vincent.

"And her partner," continued Claudia, "is Mr. Worth, a very promising young—" (she could not say gentleman; she would not say man; so she hesitated a little while, and then said)—"He is a very talented young law student with my papa."

"Ah!—do you know that at first I really took him for an old friend of mine, an American gentleman from—Maryland, I believe."

"Mr. Worth is from Maryland," said Claudia.

"Then he is probably a relative of the gentleman in question. The likeness is so very striking; indeed, if it were not that Mr.

—Worth, did you say his name was?—is a rather large man, I should take him to be Mr. Brudenell. I wonder whether they are related?"

"I do not know," said Claudia. And of course she did not know; but notwithstanding that, the hot blood rushed up to her face, flushing it with a deep flush, for she remembered the fatal words that had forever affected Ishmael in her estimation.

His mother was never married, and no one on earth knows who his father was.

The viscount looked at her; he was a man accustomed to read much in little; but not always aright; he read a great deal in Claudia's deep blush and short reply; but not the whole; he read that Claudia Merlin, the rich heiress, loved her father's poor young law student; but no more; and he resolved to make the acquaintance of the young fellow, who must be related to the Brudenells, he thought, so as to see for himself what there was in him, beside his handsome person, to attract the admiration of Chief Justice Merlin's beautiful daughter.

"He dances well; he carries himself like my friend Herman, also. I fancy they *must* be nearly related," he continued, as he watched Ishmael going through the quadrille.

"I am unable to inform you whether he is or not," answered Claudia.

While they talked, the dance went on. Presently it was ended.

"You must come up, now, and speak to Claudia. She is the queen of the evening, you know!" said Ishmael's gentle partner.

"I know it, dear Bee; and I am going to pay my respects; but let me find you a seat first," replied the young man.

"No, I will go with you; I have not yet spoken to Claudia this evening," said Bee.

Ishmael offered his arm and escorted her across the room to the sofa that was doing duty as throne for "the queen of the evening."

"I am glad to see you looking so well, Bee! Mr. Worth, I hope you are enjoying yourself," was the greeting of Miss Merlin, as they came up.

Then turning toward the viscount, she said:

"Beatrice, my dear, permit me—Lord Vincent, my cousin, Miss Middleton."

A low bow from the gentleman, a slight courtesy from the lady, and that was over.

"Lord Vincent—Mr. Worth," said Claudia.

Two distant bows acknowledged this introduction—so distant that Claudia felt herself called upon to mediate, which she did by saying:

"Mr. Worth, Lord Vincent has been particularly interested in you, ever since you entered the room. He fancies a striking

resemblance between yourself and a very dear friend of his own, who is also from your native county."

Ishmael looked interested, and his smiling eyes turned from Claudia to Lord Vincent in good-humored inquiry.

"I allude to Mr. Herman Brudenell of Brudenell Hall, Maryland, who has been living in England lately. There is a very striking likeness between him and yourself; so striking that I might have mistaken one for the other; but that you are *larger*, and, now that I see you closely, *darker*, than he is. Perhaps you are relatives," said Lord Vincent.

"Oh, no; not at all; not the most distant. I am not even acquainted with the gentleman; never set eyes on him in my life!" said Ishmael, smiling ingenuously; for of course he thought he was speaking the exact truth.

But oh, Herman! oh, Nora! if he from the Nethermost parts of the earth—if she from the highest Heaven could have heard that honest denial of his parentage from the truthful lips of their gifted son!

"There is something incomprehensible in the caprices of Nature, in making people who are in no way related so strongly resemble each other," said Lord Vincent.

"There is," admitted Ishmael.

At this moment the music ceased, the dancers left the floor, and there was a considerable movement of the company toward the back of the room.

"I think they are going to supper. Will you permit me to take you in, Miss Merlin?" said Lord Vincent, offering his arm.

"If you please," said Claudia, rising to take it.

"Shall I have the honor, dear Bee?" inquired Ishmael.

Beatrice answered by putting her hand within Ishmael's arm. And they followed the company to the supper room—a scene of splendor, magnificence and luxury that baffles all description, except that of the reporter of the *Republican Court Journal*, who, in speaking of the supper, said:

"In all his former efforts, it was granted by everyone, that Devizac surpassed *all others*; but in this supper at Judge Merlin's, Devizac surpassed *himself!*"

After supper, Ishmael danced the last quadrille with Miss Tourneysee; and when that was over, the time-honored old contra dance of Sir Roger de Coverly was called, in which nearly all the company took part—Ishmael dancing with the daughter of a distinguished senator, and a certain Captain Todd dancing with Bee.

When this last dance was over, the hour being two o'clock in the morning, the party separated, well pleased with their evening's entertainment. Ishmael went up to his den, and retired to bed: but ah! not to repose. The unusual excitement of the evening, the light, the splendor, the luxury, the guests,

and among them all the figures of Claudia and the viscount, haunting memory and stimulating imagination, forbade repose. Ever, in the midst of all his busy, useful, aspiring life, he was conscious, deep in his heart, of a gnawing anguish, whose name was Claudia Merlin. To-night this deep-seated anguish tortured him like the vulture of Prometheus. One vivid picture was always before his mind's eye—the sofa, with the beautiful figure of Claudia reclining upon it, and the stately form of the viscount, leaning with deferential admiration over her. The viscount's admiration of the beauty was patent; he did not attempt to conceal it. Claudia's pride and pleasure in her conquest were also undeniable; she took no pains to veil them.

And for this cause Ishmael could not sleep, but lay battling all night with his agony. He arose the next morning pale and ill, from the restless bed and wretched night, but fully resolved to struggle with and conquer his hopeless love.

"I must not, I will not let this passion enervate me! I have work to do in this world, and I must do it with all my strength!" he said to himself, as he went into the library.

Ishmael had gradually passed upward from his humble position of amanuensis to be the legal assistant and almost partner of the judge in his office business. In fact, Ishmael *was* his partner in everything except a share in the profits; he received none of them; he still worked for his small salary as amanuensis; not that the judge willfully availed himself of the young man's valuable assistance, without giving him due remuneration; but the change in Ishmael's relations to his employer had come on so naturally and gradually, that at no one time had the thought of raising the young man's salary to the same elevation of his position and services occurred to Judge Merlin.

It was ever by measuring himself with others, that Ishmael proved his own relative proportion of intellect, knowledge and power. He had been diligently studying law for more than two years. He had been attending the sessions of the courts of law both in the country and in the city. And he had been the confidential assistant of Judge Merlin for many months.

In his attendance upon the sessions of the circuit courts in Washington, and in listening to the pleadings of the lawyers and the charges of the judges, and watching the results of the trials—he had made this discovery—namely, that he had attained as fair a knowledge of law as was possessed by many of the practicing lawyers of these courts, and he resolved to consult his employer, Judge Merlin, upon the expediency of his making application for admission to practice at the Washington bar.

CHAPTER LV.

ISHMAEL took an early opportunity of speaking to the judge of his projects. It was one day when they had got through the morning's work and were seated in the library together, enjoying a desultory chat before it was time to go to court, that Ishmael said:

"Judge Merlin, I am about to make an application to be admitted to practice at the Washington bar."

The judge looked up in surprise.

"Why, Ishmael, you have not been graduated at any law school! You have not even had one term of instruction at any such school."

"I know that I have not enjoyed such advantages, sir; but I have read law very diligently for the last three years, and with what memory and understanding I possess, I have profited by my reading."

"But that is not like a regular course of study at a law school."

"Perhaps not, sir; but in addition to my reading, I have had a considerable experience while acting as your clerk."

"So you have; and you have profited by all the experience you have gained while with me. I have seen that; you have acquitted yourself unusually well, and been of very great service to me; but still I insist that law-office business and law-book knowledge is not everything; there is more required to make a good lawyer."

"I know there is, sir; very much more, and I have taken steps to acquire it. For nearly two years I have regularly attended the sessions of the courts, both in St. Mary's County and here in this city, and in that time have learned something of the practice of law," persisted Ishmael.

"All very well, so far as it goes, young man; but it would have been better if you had graduated at some first-class law school," insisted the old-fashioned, conservative judge.

"Excuse me, sir, if I venture to differ with you, so far as to say, that I do not think a degree absolutely necessary to success; or indeed of much consequence one way or the other," modestly replied Ishmael.

The judge opened his conservative eyes to their widest extent.

"What reason have you for such an opinion as *that*, Ishmael?" he inquired.

"Observation, sir. In my attendance upon the sessions of the courts, I have observed some gentlemen of the legal profession who were graduates of distinguishd law schools, but yet made very poor barristers. I have noticed others who never

saw the inside of a law school, but yet who made very able barristers."

"But with all this you must admit that the great majority of distinguished lawyers have been graduates of first-class law schools."

"Oh, yes, sir; I admit that. I admit also—for who, in his senses, could deny them?—the very great advantages of these schools as *facilities*; I only contend that they cannot insure success to any law student who has not talent, industry, perseverance, and a taste for the profession; and that to one who has all these elements of success, a diploma from the schools is not necessary. I think it is the same in every branch of human usefulness. Look at the science of war. Remember the Revolutionary times. Were the great generals of that epoch graduates of any military academy? No, they came from the plow, the workshop and the counting-house. No doubt it would have been highly advantageous to them had they been graduates of some first-class military academy; I only say it was found not to be absolutely necessary to their success as great generals; and in our later wars, we have not found the graduates of West Point, who had a great theoretic knowledge of the science of war, more successful in action than the volunteers, whose only school was actual practice in the field. And look at our Senate and House of Representatives, sir; are the most distinguished statesmen there graduates of colleges? Quite the reverse. I do not wish to be so irreverent as to disparage schools and colleges, sir. I only wish to be so just as to exalt talent, industry and perseverance to their proper level," said Ishmael, warmly.

"Special pleading, my boy," said the judge.

Ishmael blushed, laughed and replied:

"Yes, sir, I acknowledge that it is *very* special pleading. I have made up my mind to be a candidate for admission to the Washington bar; and having done so, I would like to get your approbation."

"What do you want with my approbation, boy? With or without it, you will get on."

"But more *pleasantly* with it, sir," smiled Ishmael.

"Very well! very well! take it then! Go ahead! I wish you success! But what is the use of telling you to go ahead, when you will go ahead anyhow, in spite of fate? Or why should I wish you success, when I know you will command success? Ah, Ishmael, you can do without me; but how shall I ever be able to do without you?" inquired the judge, with an odd expression between a smile and a sigh.

"My friend and patron, I must be admitted to practice at the Washington bar; but I will not upon that account leave your service while I can be of use to you," said Ishmael, with

earnestness; for next to adoring Claudia, he loved best for her sake to honor her father.

"That's a good lad! Be sure you keep your promise," said the judge, smiling, and laying his hand caressingly on Ishmael's head.

And then as it was time for the judge to go to the Supreme Court, he arose and departed, leaving Ishmael to write out a number of legal documents.

Ishmael lost no time in carrying his resolution into effect. He passed a very successful examination and was duly admitted to practice in the Washington courts of law.

A few evenings after this, as Ishmael was still busy in the little library, trying to finish a certain task before the last beams of the sun had faded away, the judge entered, smiling, holding in his hand a formidable-looking document and a handful of gold coin.

"There, Ishmael," he said, laying the document and the gold on the table, before the young man; "there is your first brief and your first fee! Let me tell you it is a very unusual windfall for an unfledged lawyer like you."

"I suppose I owe this to yourself, sir," said Ishmael, looking up gratefully.

"You owe it to your own merits, my lad! I will tell you all about it. To-day I met in the court an old acquaintance of mine—Mr. Ralph Walsh. He has been separated from his wife for some time past, living in the South; but he has recently returned to the city, and has sought a reconciliation with her, which, for some reason or other, she has refused. He next tried to get possession of their children, in order to coerce her through her affection for them; but she suspected his design and frustrated it by removing the children to a place of secrecy. All this Walsh told me this morning, in the court, where he had come to get the *habeas corpus* served upon the woman ordering her to produce the children in court. It will be granted, of course, and he will sue for the possession of the children, and his wife will contest the suit; she will contest it in vain, of course, for the law always gives the father possession of the children, unless he is morally, mentally or physically incapable of taking care of them, which is not the case with Walsh; he is sound in mind, body and reputation; there is nothing to be said against him in either respect."

"What then divided him from his family?" inquired Ishmael, doubtfully.

"Oh, I don't know; he had a wandering turn of mind, and loved to travel a great deal; he has been all over the civilized and uncivilized world, too, I believe."

"And what did she do in the meantime?" inquired Ishmael, still more doubtfully.

"She? Oh, she kept a little day school."

"What, was that necessary?"

"I suppose so, else she would not have kept it."

"But did he not contribute to the support of the family?"

"I—don't know; I fear not."

"There was nothing against the wife's character?"

"Not a breath! How should there be, when she keeps a respectable school? And when he himself wishes in getting possession of the children, only to compel her through her love for them to come to him."

"Seething the kid in its mother's milk, or something quite as cruel," murmured Ishmael to himself.

The judge, who did not know what he was muttering to himself, continued:

"Well, there is the case, as Walsh delivered it to me. If there is anything else of importance connected with the case, you will doubtless find it in the brief. He actually offered the brief to *me* at first. He has been so long away that he did not know my present position, and that I had long since ceased to practice. So when he met me in the courtroom to-day, he greeted me as an old friend, told me his business at the court, said that he considered the meeting providential and offered me his brief. I explained to him the impossibility of my taking it, and then he begged me to recommend some lawyer. I named you to him without hesitation, giving you what I considered only your just meed of praise. He immediately asked me to take charge of the brief and the retaining fee and offer both to you in his name, and say to you that he should call early to-morrow morning to consult with you."

"I am very grateful to you, Judge Merlin, for your kind interest in my welfare," said Ishmael, warmly.

"Not at all, my lad! for I owe you much, Ishmael. You have been an invaluable assistant to me. Doing a great deal more for me than the letter of your duty required."

"I do not think so, sir; but I am very glad to have your approbation."

"Thank you, boy! but now, Ishmael, to business! You cannot do better than to take this brief. It is the very neatest little case that ever a lawyer had; all the plain law on your side! a dash of the sentimental too in the injured father's affection for the children that have been torn from him, the injured husband for the wife that repudiates him! Now you are good at law, but you are great at sentiment, Ishmael, and between having law on your side and sentiment at your tongue's end, you will be sure to succeed and come off with flying colors! And such success in his first case is of the utmost importance to a young lawyer. It is in fact the making of his fortune. You will have a shower of briefs follow this success."

"I do not know that I shall take the brief, sir," said Ishmael, thoughtfully.

"Not take the brief? Are you mad? Who ever heard of a young lawyer refusing to take such a brief as that?—accompanied by such a retaining fee as that?—the brief the neatest and safest little case that ever came before a court! the retaining fee a hundred dollars! and no doubt he will hand you double that sum when you get your decision!—for whatever his fortune has been in times past, he is rich now, this Walsh!" said the judge, vehemently.

"Who is the counsel for the other side?" asked Ishmael, reflectively.

"Ha, ha, ha! *there's* where the shoe hurts, is it! *there's* where the pony halts? *that's* what's the matter? You are afraid of encountering some of the great guns of the law, are you? Don't be alarmed. The schoolmistress is too poor to pay for distinguished legal talent. She may get some briefless pettifogger to appear for her; a man set up for you to knock down. Your case is just what the first case of a young lawyer should be, plain sailing, law distinctly on your side, dash of sentiment, domestic affections, and all that, and certain success at the end. Your victory will be as easy as it will be complete."

"Poor thing," murmured Ishmael—"too poor to employ talent for the defense of her possession of her own children!"

"Come, my lad! pocket your fee and take up your brief!" said the judge.

"I would rather not, sir; I do not like to appear against a woman—a mother defending her right in her own children. It appears to me to be cruel to wish to deprive her of them," said the gentle-spirited young lawyer.

"Cruel! it is merciful rather. No one wishes really to deprive her of them, but to give them to their father, that she may be drawn through her love for them to live with him."

"No woman should be so coerced, sir; no man should wish her to be."

"But I tell you it is for her good to be reunited to her husband."

"Her own heart, taught by her own instincts and experiences, is the best judge of that."

"Ishmael! don't be Quixotic: if you do, you will never succeed in the legal profession. In this case the law is on the father's side, and you should be on the law's."

"The law is the minister of justice, and shall never in my hands become the accomplice of injustice! The law *may* be on the father's side; but that remains to be proved when both sides shall be heard; but it appears to me that justice and mercy are on the mother's side."

"That remains to be proved. Come, boy, don't be so mad as

to refuse this golden opening to fame and fortune! Pocket your fee and take up your brief."

"Judge Merlin! I thank you from the depths of my heart for your great goodness in procuring this chance for me; and I beg that you will pardon me for what I am about to say—but I cannot touch either fee or brief. The case is a case of cruelty, sir, and I cannot have anything to do with it. I cannot make my *début* in a court of law against a poor woman—a poor mother—to tear from her the babes she is clasping to her bosom."

"Ishmael, if *those* are the sentiments and principles under which you mean to act, you will never attain the fame to which your talents might otherwise lead you—never!"

"No—never," said Ishmael, fervently—"never, if to reach it I have to step upon a woman's heart—a mother's heart! No! by the sacred grave of my own dear mother, I never will!" And the face of Nora's son glowed with an earnest, fervent, holy love.

"Be a poet, Ishmael, you will never be a lawyer."

"Never—if to be a lawyer I have to cease to be a man! But it is as God wills."

The ringing of the tea bell broke up the conference, and they went down into the parlor, where, beside the family, they found Viscount Vincent.

And Ishmael Worth, the weaver's son, had the honor of sitting down to tea with a live lord.

The viscount spent the evening, and retired late.

As Ishmael bade the family good night, the judge said to him:

"My young friend, consult your pillow. I always do, when I can, before making any important decision. Think over the matter well, my lad, and defer your final decision about the brief until you see Walsh to-morrow."

"You are very, very kind to me, sir. I will follow your advice, as far as I may do so," replied Ishmael.

That night, lying upon his bed, Ishmael's soul was assailed with temptation. He knew that in accepting the brief offered to him, in such flattering terms, he should in the first place very much please his friend, Judge Merlin—who, though he did not give his young assistant anything like a fair salary for his services, yet took almost a fatherly interest in his welfare; he knew also, in the second place, that he might—nay, would—open his way to a speedy success and a brilliant professional career, which would, in a reasonable space of time, place him in a position even to aspire to the hand of Claudia Merlin! Oh, most beautiful of temptations that! To refuse the brief, he knew, would be to displease Judge Merlin, and to defer his own professional success for an indefinite length of time!

All night long Ishmael struggled with the tempter. In the morning he arose from his sleepless pillow unrefreshed and fevered. He bathed his burning head, made his morning toilet, and sat down to read a portion of the Scripture, as was his morning custom, before beginning the business of the day. The portion selected this morning was the fourth chapter of Matthew, describing the fast and the temptation of our Savior. Ishmael had read this portion of Scripture many times before, but never with such deep interest as now, when it seemed to answer so well his own spirit's need. With the deepest reverence he read the words.

"When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterwards an hungred.

"The devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;

"And saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

"Then the devil leaveth Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him."

Ishmael closed the book and bowed his head in serious thought.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I suppose it must be so. The servant is not greater than the Master. He was tempted in the very opening of His ministry; and I suppose that every follower of Him must be tempted in like manner in the beginning of his life. I, also, here in the commencement of my professional career, am subjected to a great temptation, that must decide, once for all, whether I will serve God or Satan! I, too, have had a long, long fast—a fast from all the pleasant things of this world, and I am an hungered—ah, very much hungered for some joys! I, too, am offered success and honor and glory if I will but fall down and worship Satan in the form of the golden fee and the cruel brief held out to me! But I will not! Oh, Heaven helping me, I will be true to my highest convictions of duty! Yes—come weal or come woe, I will be true to God! I will be a faithful steward of the talents He has intrusted to me!"

And with this resolution in his heart, Ishmael went down into the library, and commenced his usual morning's work of answering letters and writing out law documents. He found an unusual number of letters to write, and they occupied him until the breakfast bell rang.

After breakfast Ishmael returned to the library and resumed his work, and was busily engaged in engrossing a deed of con-

veyance, when the door opened, and Judge Merlin entered, accompanied by a tall, dark-haired, handsome, and rather prepossessing-looking man, of about fifty years of age, whom he introduced as Mr. Walsh.

Ishmael arose to receive the visitor and offer him a chair, which he took.

The judge declined the seat that Ishmael placed for him, and said:

"No, I will leave you with your client, Ishmael, that he may explain his business at full length. I have an engagement at the State Department, and I will go to keep it."

And the judge bowed and left the room.

As soon as they were left alone, Mr. Walsh began to explain his business, first saying that he presumed Judge Merlin had handed him the retaining fee and the brief.

"Yes; you will find both there on the table beside you, untouched," answered Ishmael, gravely.

"Ah—you have not had time yet to look at the brief! No matter; we can go over it together," said Mr. Walsh, taking up the document in question, and beginning to unfold it.

"I beg you will excuse me, sir; I would rather not look at the brief, as I cannot take the case," said Ishmael.

"You cannot take the case? Why, I understood from Judge Merlin that your time was not quite filled up; that you were not overwhelmed with cases, and that you could very well find time to conduct mine. Can you not do so?"

"It is not a question of time or the pressure of business. I have abundance of the first and very little of the last. In fact, sir, I have been but very recently admitted to the bar, and have not yet been favored with a single case; I am as yet a briefless lawyer."

"Not briefless if you take my brief; for the judge speaks in the highest terms of your talents; and I know that a young barrister always bestows great care upon his first case," said Mr. Walsh, pleasantly.

"Pray excuse me, sir; but I decline the case."

"But upon what ground?"

"Upon the ground of principle, sir. I cannot array myself against a mother, who is defending her right to the possession of her own babes," said Ishmael gravely.

"Oh, I see! chivalric! Well, that is very becoming in a young man. But, bless you, my dear sir, you are mistaken in your premises! I do not really wish to part the mother and children. If you will give me your attention, I will explain—" began the would-be client.

"I beg that you will not, sir; excuse me, I pray you; but as I really cannot take the case, I ought not to hear your statement."

"Oh, nonsense, my young friend! I know what is the matter with you; but when you have heard my statement, you will accept my brief," said Walsh, pleasantly, for, according to a well-known principle in human nature, he grew anxious to secure the services of the young barrister just in proportion to the difficulty of getting them.

And so, notwithstanding the courteous remonstrances of Ishmael, he commenced and told his story.

It was the story of an egotist so intensely egotistical as to be quite unconscious of his egotism; forever thinking of himself—forever oblivious of others except as they ministered to his self-interest; filled up to the lips with the feeling of his rights and privileges; but entirely empty of any notion of his duties and responsibilities. With him it was always "*I*," "*mine*," "*me*"; never "*we*," "*ours*," "*us*."

Ishmael listened under protest to this story that was forced upon his unwilling ears. At its end when the narrator was waiting to see what impression he had made upon his young hearer, and what comment the latter would make, Ishmael calmly arose, took the brief from the table and put it into the hands of Mr. Walsh, saying, with a dignity—aye, even a majesty of mien rarely found in so young a man:

"Take your brief, sir; nothing on earth could induce me to touch it!"

"What! not after the full explanation I have given you?" exclaimed the man, in naïve surprise.

"If I had entertained a single doubt about the propriety of refusing your brief, *before* hearing your explanation, that doubt would have been set at rest *after* hearing it," said the young barrister, sternly.

"What do you mean, sir?" questioned the other, bristling up.

"I mean that the case, even by your own plausible showing, is one of the greatest cruelty and injustice," replied Ishmael, firmly.

"Cruelty and injustice!" exclaimed Mr. Walsh, in even more astonishment than anger. "Why, what the deuce do you mean by that? The woman is my own wife! the children are my own children! And I have a lawful right to the possession of them. I wonder what the deuce you mean by cruelty and injustice!"

"By your own account, you left your wife nine years ago without provocation, and without making the slightest provision for herself and her children; you totally neglected them from that time to this; leaving her to struggle alone and unaided through all the privations and perils of such an unnatural position; during all these years she has worked for the support and education of her children; and now, at last, when it suits you to live with her again, you come back, and finding that you have irrecoverably lost her confidence and estranged

her affections, you would call in the aid of the law to tear her children from her arms, and coerce her, through her love for them, to become your slave and victim again! Sir, sir, I am amazed that any man of—I will not say honor or honesty, but common sense and prudence—should dare to think of throwing such a case as that into court," said Ishmael, earnestly.

"What do you mean by that, sir? Your language is inadmissible, sir! The law is on my side, however!"

"If the law were on your side, the law ought to be remodeled without delay; but if you venture to go to trial with such a case as this, you will find that the law is *not* on your side! You have forfeited all right to interfere with Mrs. Walsh, or her children; and I would earnestly advise you to avoid meeting her in court."

"Your language is insulting, sir! Judge Merlin held a different opinion from yours of this case!" exclaimed Mr. Walsh, with excitement.

"Judge Merlin could not have understood the merits of the case. But it is quite useless to prolong this interview, sir; I have an engagement at ten o'clock and must wish you good morning," said Ishmael, rising and ringing the bell, and then drawing on his gloves.

Jim answered the summons and entered the room.

"Attend this gentleman to the front door," said Ishmael, taking up his own hat as if to follow the visitor from the room.

"Mr. Worth, you have insulted me, sir!" exclaimed Walsh, excitedly, as he arose and snatched up his money and his brief.

"I hope I am incapable of insulting any man, sir. You forced upon me a statement that I was unwilling to receive; you asked my opinion upon it and I gave it to you," replied Ishmael.

"I will have satisfaction, sir!" exclaimed Walsh, clapping his hat upon his head and marching to the door.

"Any satisfaction that I can conscientiously afford you, shall be heartily at your service, Mr. Walsh," said Ishmael, raising his hat and bowing courteously at the retreating figure of the angry visitor.

When he was quite gone, Ishmael took up his parcels of letters and documents and went out. He went first to the post office to mail his letters, and then went to the City Hall, where the Circuit Court was sitting.

As Ishmael walked on toward the City Hall he thought over the dark story he had just heard. He knew very well that, according to the custom of human nature, the man, however truthful in intention, had put the story in its fairest light; and yet how dark, with sin on one side and sorrow on the other, it looked! And if it looked so dark from his fair showing, how much darker it must look from the other point of view! A

deep pity for the woman took possession of his heart; an earnest wish to help her inspired his mind. He thought of his own young mother whom he had never seen, yet always loved. And he resolved to assist this poor mother, who had no money to pay counsel to help her defend her children, because it took every cent she could earn to feed and clothe them.

"Yes, the cause of the oppressed is the cause of God! And I will offer the fruits of my professional labors to Him," said Nora's son, as he reached the City Hall.

Ishmael was not one to wait for a "favorable opportunity." Few opportunities ever came to him except in the shape of temptations, which he resisted. He *made* his opportunities. So when the business that brought him to the court room was completed, he turned his steps toward the Capitol Hill. For he had learned from the statements of Judge Merlin and Mr. Walsh that it was there the poor mother kept her little day school. After some inquiries, he succeeded in finding the schoolhouse—a little white frame building, with a front and back door and four windows, two on each side, in a little yard at the corner of the street. Ishmael opened the gate and rapped at the door. It was opened by a little girl, who civilly invited him to enter. Ishmael entered and took the whole scene in at a glance.

A little school of about a dozen small girls, of the middle class in society, seated on forms ranged in exact order on each side the narrow aisle that led up to the teacher's desk. Seated behind that desk was a little, thin, dark-haired woman, dressed in a black alpaca and white collar and cuffs. At the entrance of Ishmael, she glanced up with large, scared-looking black eyes that seemed to fear in every stranger to see an enemy or a peril. As Ishmael advanced toward her those wild eyes grew wilder with terror, her cheeks blanched to a deadly whiteness and she clasped her hands and she trembled.

"Poor hunted hare! she fears even in me a foe!" thought Ishmael, as he walked up to the desk. She arose and leaned over the desk, looking at him eagerly and inquiringly with those frightened eyes.

And now for the first time Ishmael felt a sense of embarrassment. A generous, youthful impulse to help the oppressed had hurried him to her presence; but what should he say to her? how apologize for his unsolicited visit? how venture, unauthorized, to intermeddle with her business?

He bowed and laid his card before her.

She snatched it up and read it eagerly—

ISHMAEL WORTH,

Attorney-at-Law.

"Ah! you—I have been expecting this. You come from my—I mean Mr. Walsh?" she inquired, palpitating with panic.

"No, madam," said Ishmael, in a sweet, reassured, and reassuring tone, for compassion for her had restored confidence to him. "No, madam, I am not the counsel of Mr. Walsh."

"You—you come from court, then? Perhaps you are going to have the writ of *habeas corpus*, with which I have been threatened, served upon me? You need not! I won't give up my children! they are my own! I won't for twenty writs of *habeas corpus*!" she exclaimed excitedly.

"But, madam," began Ishmael, soothingly.

"Hush! I know what you are going to say; you needn't say it! You are going to tell me that a writ of *habeas corpus* is the most powerful engine the law can bring to bear upon me! that to resist it would be flagrant contempt of court, subjecting me to fine and imprisonment! I do not care! I do not care! I *have* contempt, a very profound contempt, for any court, or any law, that would try to wrest from a Christian mother the children that she has borne, fed, clothed and educated all herself, and give them to a man who has totally neglected them all their lives. Nature is hard enough upon woman, the Lord knows! giving her a weaker frame and a heavier burden than is allotted to man! but the law is harder still! taking from her the sacred rights with which nature in compensation has invested her! But I will not yield mine! There! Do your worst! Serve your writ of *habeas corpus*! I will resist it! I will not give up my own children! I will not bring them into court! I will not tell you where they are! *They* are in a place of safety, thank God! and as for me—fine, imprison, torture me as much as you like, you will find me rock!" she exclaimed, with her eyes flashing and all her little dark figure bristling with terror and resistance, for all the world like a poor little frightened kitten spluttering defiance at a big dog!

Ishmael did not interrupt her; he let her go on with her wild talk; he had been too long used to poor Hannah's excitable nerves not to have learned patience with women.

"Yes, you will find me rock—rock!" she repeated; and to prove how much of a rock she was, the poor little creature dropped her head upon the desk, burst into tears, and sobbed hysterically.

Ishmael's experience taught him to let her sob on until her fit of passion had exhausted itself.

Meanwhile one or two of the most sensitive little girls, seeing their teacher weep, fell to crying for company; others whispered among themselves; and others, again, looked belligerent.

"Go tell him to go away, Mary," said one little one.

"I don't like to; *you* go, Ellen," said another.

"I'm afraid."

"Oh, you scary things! I'll go myself," said a third; and, rising, this little one came to the rescue, and standing up firmly before the intruder said:

"What do you come here for, making our teacher cry? Go home this minute; if you don't I'll run right across the street and fetch my father from the shop to you! he's as big as you are!"

Ishmael turned his beautiful eyes upon this little champion of six summers, and smiling upon her, said gently:

"I did not come here to make anybody cry, my dear; I came to do your teacher a service."

The child met his glance with a searching look, such as only babes can give, and turned and went back and reported to her companions.

"He's good; he won't hurt anybody."

Mrs. Walsh having sobbed herself into quietness, wiped her eyes, looked up and said:

"Well, sir, why don't you proceed with your business? Why, don't you serve your writ?"

"My dear madam, it is not my business to serve writs. And if it was I have none to serve," said Ishmael, very gently.

She looked at him in doubt.

"You have mistaken my errand here, madam. I am not retained on the other side; I have nothing whatever to do with the other side. I have heard your story; my sympathies are with *you*; and I have come here to offer you my professional services," said Ishmael, gravely.

She looked at him earnestly as if she would read his soul. The woman of thirty was not so quick at reading character as the little child of six had been.

"Have you counsel?" inquired Ishmael.

"Counsel? No! Where should I get it?"

"Will you accept me as your counsel? I came here to offer you my services."

"I tell you that I have no means, sir."

"I do not want any remuneration in your case; I wish to serve you, for your own sake and for God's; something we must do for God's sake and for our fellow-creatures'. I wish to be your counsel in the approaching trial. I think, with the favor of Divine Providence, I can bring your case to a successful issue and secure you in the peaceful possession of your children."

"Do you think so? Oh! do you think so?" she inquired, eagerly, warmly.

"I really do! I think so, even from the showing of the other side, who, of course, put the fairest face upon their own cause."

"And will you? Oh! will you?"

"With the help of Heaven, I will."

"Oh, surely Heaven has sent you to my aid."

At this moment the little school clock struck out sharply the hour of noon.

"It is the children's recess," said the teacher. "Lay aside your books, dears, and leave the room quietly and in good order."

The children took their hoods and cloaks from the pegs on which they hung, and went out one by one—each child turning to make her little courtesy, before passing the door. Thus all went out but two little sisters, who living at a distance had brought their luncheon, which they now took to the open front door, where they sat on the steps in the pleasant winter sunshine to eat.

The teacher turned to her young visitor.

"Will you sit down? And ah! will you pardon me for the rude reception I gave you?"

"Pray do not think of it! It was so natural that I have not given it a thought," said Ishmael, gently.

"It is not my disposition to do so; but I have suffered so much; I have been goaded nearly to desperation!"

"I see that, madam; you are excessively nervous."

"Nervous! why, women have been driven to madness and death, with less cause than I have had!"

"Do you think of your troubles in that manner, madam; do not excite yourself, compose yourself, rather. Believe me, it is of the utmost importance to your success, that you should exhibit coolness and self-possession."

"Oh, but I have had so much sorrow for so many years!"

"Then, in the very nature of things, your sorrows must soon be over! Nothing lasts long in this world. But you have had a recent bereavement," said Ishmael, gently, and glancing at her black dress; for he thought it was better that she should think of her chastening from the hands of God, rather than her wrongs from those of men. But, to his surprise, the woman smiled faintly as she also glanced at her dress, and replied:

"Oh, no! I have lost no friend by death since the decease of my parents many years ago, far back in my childhood. No, I am not wearing mourning for any one. I wear this black alpaca because it is cheap and decent and protective."

"Protective?"

"Ah, yes! no one knows *how* protective the black dress is to a woman, better than I do! There are few who would ven-

ture to treat with levity or disrespect a quiet women in a black dress. And so I, who have no father, brother, or husband to protect me, take a shelter under a black alpaea. It repels dirt, too, as well as disrespect. It is clean as well as safe, and that is a great desideratum to a poor schoolmistress," she said, smiling, with an almost childlike candor.

"I am glad to see you smile again; and now, shall we go to business?" said Ishmael.

"Oh, yes, thank you."

"I must ask you to be perfectly candid with me; it is necessary."

"Oh, yes, I know it is, and I will be so; for I can trust you, now."

"Tell me, then, as clearly, as fully, and as calmly as you can, the circumstances of your case."

"I will try to do so," said the woman.

It is useless to repeat her story here. It was only the same old story—of the young girl of fortune marrying a spendthrift, who dissipated her property, estranged her friends, alienated her affections, and then left her penniless, to struggle alone with all the ills of poverty to bring up her three little girls. By her own unaided efforts she had fed, clothed and educated her three children for the last nine years. And now he had come back and wanted her to live with him again. But she had not only ceased to love him, but began to dread him, lest he should get into debt and make way with the little personal property she had gathered by years of labor, frugality, self-denial.

"He says that he is wealthy, how is that?" questioned Ishmael.

A spasm of pain passed over her sensitive face.

"I did not like to tell you, although I promised to be candid with you; but ah! I cannot benefit by his wealth; I could not conscientiously appropriate one dollar; and even if I could do so, I could *not* trust in its continuance; the money is ill-gotten and evanescent; it is the money of a gambler, who is a prince one hour and a pauper the next."

Then seeing Ishmael shrink back in painful surprise, she added:

"To do him justice, Mr. Worth, that is his only vice; it has ruined my little family; it has brought us to the very verge of beggary; it must not be permitted to do so again; I must defend my little home and little girls against the spoiler."

"Certainly," said Ishmael, whose time was growing short; "give me a pen and ink; I will take down minutes of the statement that you have made me, and then read it to you, to see if it is correct."

She placed stationery before him on one of the school desks, and he sat down and went to work.

"You have witnesses to support your statement?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes! scores of them, if wanted."

"Give me the names of the most important and the facts they can swear to."

Mrs. Walsh complied, and he took them down. When he had finished and read over the brief to her, and received her assurance that it was correct, he arose to take his leave.

"But—will not all those witnesses cost a great deal of money? And will not there be other heavy expenses apart from the services of counsel that you are so good as to give me?" inquired the teacher, anxiously.

"Not for you," replied Ishmael, in a soothing voice, as he shook hands with her, and with the promise to see her again at the same hour the next day, took his leave.

He smiled upon the little sisters as he passed them in the doorway, and then left the schoolhouse and hurried on toward home.

"Well!" said Judge Merlin, who was waiting for him in the library, "have you decided? Are you counsel for the plaintiff in the great suit of Walsh *versus* Walsh?"

"No," answered Ishmael, "I am retained for the defendant. I have just had a consultation with my client."

"Great Jove!" exclaimed the judge, in unbounded astonishment. "It was raving madness in you to refuse the plaintiff's brief; but to accept the defendant's—"

"I did not only accept it! I went and asked for it," said Ishmael, smiling.

"Mad! mad! You will lose your first case; and that will throw back your success for years!"

"I hope not, sir! 'Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,'" smiled Ishmael.

At the luncheon table that day the judge told the story of Ishmael's Quixotism, as he called it, in refusing the brief and the thumping fee of the plaintiff, who had the law all on his side; and whom his counsel would be sure to bring through victoriously; and taking in hand the cause of the defendant, who had no money to pay her counsel, no law on her side, and who was bound to be defeated.

"But she has justice and mercy on her side; and it shall go hard but I prove the law on her side, too."

"A forlorn hope, Ishmael! a forlorn hope!" said Mr. Middleton.

"Forlorn hopes are always led by heroes, papa," said Bee.

"And fools!" blurted out Judge Merlin.

Ishmael did not take offense; he knew all that was said was

well meant; the judge talked to him with the plainness of a parent; and Ishmael rather enjoyed being affectionately blown up by Claudia's father.

Miss Merlin now looked up, and condescended to say:

"I am very sorry, Ishmael, that you refused the rich client; he might have been the making of you."

"The making of Ishmael! With the blessing of Heaven, he will make himself! I am very glad he refused the oppressor's gold!" exclaimed Bee, before Ishmael could reply.

When Bee ceased to speak, he said:

"I am very sorry, Miss Merlin, to oppose your sentiments in any instance, but in this I could not do otherwise."

"It is simply a question of right or wrong! If the man's cause was bad, Ishmael was right to refuse his brief; if the woman's cause was good, he was right to take her brief," said Mrs. Middleton, as they all arose from the table.

That evening Ishmael found himself by chance alone in the drawing-room with Bee.

He was standing before the front window, gazing sadly into vacancy. The carriage, containing Miss Merlin, Lord Vincent, and Mrs. Middleton as chaperone, had just rolled away from the door. They were going to a dinner party at the President's. And Ishmael was gazing sadly after them, when Bee came up to his side and spoke:

"I am very glad, Ishmael, that you have taken sides with the poor mother; it was well done!"

"Thank you, dear Bee! I hope it was well done; I do not regret doing it; but they say that I have ruined my prospects for many years to come," replied the young man.

"Do not believe it, Ishmael! Have more faith in the triumph of right against overwhelming odds. I like the lines you quoted—'Thrice is he armed who feels his quarrel just!' The poets teach us a great deal, Ishmael. Only to-day I happened to be reading in Scott—in one of his novels, by the way, this was, however—of the deadly encounter in the lists between the Champion of Wrong, the terrible knight Brian de Bois Guilbert, and the Champion of Right, the gentle knight Ivanhoe. Do you remember, Ishmael, how Ivanhoe arose from his bed of illness, pale, feeble, reeling, scarcely able to bear the weight of his armor, or to sit his horse, much less encounter such a thunderbolt of war as Bois Guilbert? There seemed not a hope in the world for Ivanhoe. Yet, in the first encounter of the knights, it was the terrible Bois Guilbert that rolled in the dust! Might is not right; but right is might, Ishmael!"

"I know it, dear Bee! thank you, thank you for making me feel it also!" said Ishmael, fervently.

"The alternative presented to you last night and this morning was sent as a trial, Ishmael; such a trial, as I think every

man must encounter once in his life, as a decisive test of his spirit. Even our Savior was tempted, offered all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, if he would fall down and worship Satan. But he rebuked the tempter and the Devil fled from him."

"*And angels came and ministered to him,*" said Ishmael, in a voice of ineffable tenderness, as the tears filled his eyes and he approached his arm toward Bee. His impulse was to draw her to his bosom and press a kiss on her brow—as a brother's embrace of a loved sister; but Ishmael's nature was as refined and delicate as it was fervent and earnest; and he abstained from this caress; he said instead:

"You are my guardian angel, Bee! I have felt it long, little sister! you never fail in a crisis!"

"And while I live I never will, Ishmael! You will not need man's help, for you will help yourself, but what woman may do to aid and comfort, that will I do for you, my brother."

"What a Heavenly spirit is yours, Bee!" said Ishmael, fervently.

"And now let us talk of business, please," said practical little Bee, who never indulged in sentiment long. "That poor mother! You give her your services, gratuitously of course?"

"Certainly," said Ishmael.

"But, apart from her counsel's fee, will she not have other expenses to meet in conducting this suit?"

"Yes."

"How will she meet them?"

"Bee, dear, I have saved a little money; I mean to use it in her service."

"What!" exclaimed the young girl; "do you mean to give her your professional aid and pay all her expenses besides?"

"Yes," said Ishmael, "as far as the money will go. I do this, dear Bee, as a 'thank offering' to the Lord for all the success He has given me, up to this time. When I think of the days of my childhood in that poor Hill Hut, and compare them to these days, I am deeply impressed by the mercy He has shown me; and I think that I can never do enough to show my gratitude. I consider it the right and proper thing to offer the first fruits of my professional life to Him, through His suffering children."

"You are right, Ishmael, for God *has* blest your earnest efforts, as, indeed, he would bless those of any one so conscientious and persevering as yourself. But, Ishmael, will you have money enough to carry on the suit?"

"I hope so, Bee; I do not know."

"Here, then Ishmael, take this little roll of notes; it is a hundred dollars; use it for the woman," she said, putting in his hand a small parcel.

Ishmael hesitated a moment; but Bee hastened to reassure him by saying:

"You had as well take it as not, Ishmael. I can very well spare it, or twice as much. Papa makes me a much larger allowance than one of my simple tastes can spend. And I should like," she added, smiling, "to go partners with you in this enterprise."

"I thank you, dear Bee; and I will take your generous donation and use it if necessary. It may not be necessary," said Ishmael.

"And now I must leave you, Ishmael, and go to little Lu; she is not well this evening." And the little Madonna-like maiden glided like a spirit from the room.

The next morning Ishmael went to see his client. He showed her the absolute necessity of submission to the writ of *habeas corpus*; he promised to use his utmost skill in her case; urged her to trust the result with her Heavenly Father; and encouraged her to hope for success.

Even as he spoke, a bailiff entered and served the writ that ordered her to bring the children into court on the fifth of the ensuing month.

She followed Ishmael's advice; she promised to obey the order, adding:

"It will be on Wednesday in Easter week. That will be fortunate, as the school will have a holiday, and I shall be able to attend without neglecting the work that brings us bread."

"Are the children far away? Can you get them without inconvenience in so short a time?" inquired Ishmael.

"Oh, yes; they are in the country, with a good, honest couple, named Gray, who were here on the Christmas holidays, and boarded with my aunt, who keeps the 'Farmer's Rest,' near the Centre Market. My aunt recommended them to me, and when I saw the man I felt as if I could have trusted uncounted gold with him—he looked so true! He and his wife took my three little girls home with them, and would not take a cent of pay; and they have kept my secret religiously."

"They have indeed!" said Ishmael, in astonishment; "for they are my near relatives and never even told me!"

CHAPTER LVI.

LIKE most zealous, young, professional men, Ishmael did a great deal more work for his first client than either custom or duty exacted of him.

Authorized by her, he wrote to Reuben Gray to bring the children to the city.

And accordingly, in three days after, Reuben arrived at the "Farmer's Rest," with his wagon full of family. For he not only brought the three little girls he was required to bring, but also Hannah, her children, and her nurse maid Sally.

As soon as he had seen his party in comfortable quarters, he walked up to the Washington House to report himself to Ishmael; for, somehow or other, Reuben had grown to look upon Ishmael as his superior officer in the battle of life, and did him honor, very much as the veteran sergeant does to the young captain of his company.

Arrived in Ishmael's room, he took off his hat and said: "Here I am, sir; and I've brought 'em all along."

"All Mrs. Walsh's little girls, of course, for they are required," said Ishmael, shaking hands with Gray.

"Yes, and all the rest on 'em, Hannah and the little uns, and Sally and Sam," said Reuben, rubbing his hands gaily.

"But that was a great task!" said Ishmael, in surprise.

"Well, no, it wasn't, sir; not half so hard a task as it would have been to 'a' left them all behind, poor things. You see, sir, the reason why I brought 'em all along was because I sort o' think they love me a deal; 'pon my soul I do, sir, old and gray and rugged as I am; and I don't like to be parted from 'em, 'specially from Hannah, no, not for a day; 'cause the dear knows, sir, as we was parted long enough, poor Hannah and me; and now as we is married, and the Lord has donated us a son and daughter at the eleventh hour, unexpected, praise be unto Him for all His mercies, I never mean to part with any on 'em no more, not even for a day, till death do us part, amen; but take 'em all 'long with me, wherever I'm called to go, 'specially as me and poor Hannah was married so late in life that we ain't got many more years before us to be together."

"Nonsense, Uncle Reuben! You and Aunt Hannah will live forty or fifty years longer yet, and see your grandchildren, and maybe your great-grandchildren. You two are the stuff that centenarians are made of," exclaimed the young man, cheerily.

"Centenarians? what's them, sir?"

"People who live a hundred years."

"Law! Well, I have hearn of such things happening to other folks and why not to me and poor Hannah? Why, sir, I would be the happiest man in the world if I thought as how I had all them there years to live long o' Hannah and the little uns in this pleasant world. But His will be done!" said Gray, reverently raising his hat.

"The little girls are all right, I hope?" inquired Ishmael.

"Yes, sir; all on 'em, and a deal fatter and rosier and

healthier nor they was when I fust took 'em down. Perty, little darlings! Didn't they enjoy being in the country, neither, though it *was* the depth of winter time? Law, Ish—sir, I mean—it's a mortal sin ag'in natur' to keep chil'en in town if it can be helped! But their ma, poor thing, couldn't help it, I know. Law, Ish—sir, I mean—if you had a' seen her that same said Christmas day, as she ran in with her chil'en to her aunt as is hostess at the 'Farmer's.' If ever you see a poor little white bantam trying to cover her chicks when the hawk was hovering nigh by, you may have some idea of the way she looked when she was trying to hide her chil'en and didn't know where; 'cause she daren't keep 'em at home and daren't hide 'em at her aunt's, for her home would be the first place invaded and her aunt's the second. They was all so flustered, they took no more notice o' me standin' in the parlor 'n if I had been a pillar post, 'till feeling of pityful toward the poor things I made so bold to go forward and offer to take 'em home 'long o' me, and which was accepted with thanks and tears as soon as the landlady recommended me as an old acquaintance and well beknown to herself. So it was settled. That night when you come to spend the evening with us, Ish—sir, I mean—I really did feel guilty in having of a secret as I wouldn't tell *you*; but you see, sir, I was bound up to secrecy, and besides I thought as you was stopping in Washington City, if you knowed anythink about it you might be speened afore the court and be obliged to tell all, you know."

"You did quite right, Uncle Reuben," said Ishmael, affectionately.

"You call me Uncle Reuben, sir?"

"Why not, Uncle Reuben? and why do you call me sir?"

"Well—sir, because you are a gentleman now—not but what you allers was a gentleman by natur'; but now you are one by profession. They say you hev come to be a lawyer in the court, sir, and can stand up and plead before the judges theirselves."

"I have been admitted to the bar, Uncle Reuben."

"Yes, that's what they call it; see there now, you know, I'm only a poor ignorant man, and you have no call to own the like o' me for uncle, 'cause, come to the rights of it, I ain't your uncle at all, sir, though your friend and wellwisher allers; and to claim the likes o' me as an uncle might do you a mischief with them as thinks riches and family and outside show and book larning is everythink. So Ish—sir, I mean—I won't take no offense, nor likewise feel hurted if you leaves off calling of me uncle and calls me plain 'Gray' like Judge Merlin does."

"Uncle Reuben," said Ishmael, with feeling, "I am very anxious to advance myself in the world, very ambitious of distinction; but if I thought worldly success would or could es-

trange me from the friends of my boyhood, I would cease to wish for it. If I must cease to be true, in order to be great, I prefer to remain in obscurity. Give me your hand, Uncle Reuben, and call me Ishmael and know me for your boy."

"There, then, Ishmael! I'm glad to find you again! God bless my boy! But law! what's the use o' my axing of Him to do that? He'll do it anyways, without my axing!" said Reuben, pressing the hand of Ishmael. "And now," he added, "will you be round to the 'Farmer's' this evening to see Hannah and the young uns?"

"Yes, Uncle Reuben; but first I must go and let Mrs. Walsh know that you have brought her little girls back. I suppose she will think it best to leave them with her aunt until the day of trial."

"It will be the safest place for 'em! for besides the old lady being spunky, I shall be there to protect 'em; for I mean to stay till that same said trial and hear you make your fust speech afore the judge, and see that woman righted afore ever I goes back home again ef it costs me fifty dollars."

"I'm afraid you will find it very expensive, Uncle Reuben."

"No, I won't, sir—Ishmael, I mean; because, you see, I fotch up a lot o' spring chickens and eggs and early vegetables, and the profits I shall get offen them will pay my expenses here at the very least," said Reuben, as he arose and stood waiting with hat in hand for Ishmael's motions.

Ishmael got up and took his own hat and gloves.

"Be you going round to see the schoolmist'ess now, sir—Ishmael, I mean?"

"Yes, Uncle Reuben."

"Well, I think I'd like to walk round with you, if you don't mind. I kind o' want to see the little woman, and I kind o' don't want to part with you just yet, sir—Ishmael, I mean."

"Come along, then Uncle Reuben; she will be delighted to see her children's kind protector, and I shall enjoy your company on the way."

"And then, sir—Ishmael, I mean—when we have seen her, you will go back with me to the 'Farmer's' and see Hannah and the little un's and spend the evening long of us?"

"Yes, Uncle Reuben; and I fancy Mrs. Walsh will go with us."

"Sartain, sure, so she will, sir—Ishmael, I mean."

It was too late to find her at the schoolhouse, as it would be sure to be closed at this hour. So they walked directly to the little suburban cottage where she lived with one faithful old negro servant, who had been her nurse, and with her cow and pig and poultry and her pet dog and cat. They made her heart glad with the news of the children's arrival, and

they waited until, with fingers that trembled almost too much to do the work, she put on her bonnet and mantle to accompany them to the "Farmer's."

The meeting between the mother and children was very affecting. She informed them that, this being Holy Thursday evening, she had dismissed the school for the Easter Holidays and so could be with them all the time until she should take them into court on the Wednesday of the ensuing week.

Then in family council it was arranged that both herself and the children should remain at the "Farmer's" until the day of the trial.

As soon as all this matter was satisfactorily settled Ishmael arose and bade them all good night, promising to repeat his visit often while his relatives remained at the hotel.

It was late when Ishmael reached home, but the drawing-room was ablaze with light, and, as he passed its open door, he saw that its only occupants were the Viscount Vincent and Claudia Merlin. They were together on the sofa, talking in low, confidential tones. How beautiful she looked! smiling up to the handsome face that was bent in deferential admiration over hers. A pang of love and jealousy wrung Ishmael's heart as he hurried past and ran up the stairs to his den. There he sat down at his desk, and, bidding vain dreams begone, concentrated his thoughts upon the work before him—the first speech he was to make at the Bar.

Ishmael worked very hard the day preceding the trial; he took great pains getting up his case, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of that poor mother and her children in whom he felt so deeply interested.

No further allusion was made to the affair by any member of Judge Merlin's family until Wednesday morning, when, as they all sat around the breakfast table, the judge said:

"Well, Ishmael, the case of Walsh *versus* Walsh comes on to-day, I hear. How do you feel? a little nervous over your first case, eh?"

"Not yet; I feel only great confidence in the justice of my cause, as an earnest of success."

"The justice of his cause! poor fellow, how much he has to learn yet! Why, Ishmael, how many times have you seen justice overthrown by law?"

"Too many times, sir! but there is no earthly reason why that should happen in this case."

"Have you got your maiden speech all cut and dried and ready to deliver?"

"I have made some notes; but for the rest I shall trust to the inspiration of the instant."

"Bad plan that. S'pose the inspiration doesn't come? or s'pose you lose your presence of mind? Better have your

speech carefully written off, and then, inspiration or no inspiration, you will be able to read, at least."

"My notes are very carefully arranged; they contain the whole argument."

"And for the rest 'it shall be given ye in that hour, what ye shall speak,'" said Beatrice, earnestly.

They all arose and left the table.

"Thank you, dearest Bee," said Ishmael, as he passed her.

"God aid you, Ishmael!" she replied, fervently.

He hurried upstairs to collect his documents, and then hastened to the City Hall, where Mrs. Walsh and her children were to meet him.

He found them all in the antechamber of the court room, attended by a bodyguard composed of Reuben, Hannah, and the landlady.

He spoke a few encouraging words to his client, shook hands with the members of her party, and then took them all into the court room and showed them their places. The plaintiff was not present. The judges had not yet taken their seats. And the court room was occupied only by a few lawyers, clerks, bailiffs, constables and other officials.

In a few minutes, however, the judges entered and took their seats; the crier opened the court, the crowd poured in, the plaintiff with his counsel made his appearance, and the business of the day commenced.

I shall not give all the details of this trial; I shall only glance at a few of them.

The court room was full, but not crowded; nothing short of a murder or a divorce case ever draws a crowd to such a place.

The counsel for the plaintiff was composed of three of the oldest, ablest and most experienced members of the Washington bar. The first of these, Mr. Wiseman, was distinguished for his profound knowledge of the law, his skill in logic, and his closeness in reasoning; the second, Mr. Berners, was celebrated for his fire and eloquence; and the third, Mr. Vivian, was famous for his wit and sarcasm. Engaged on one side, they were considered invincible. To these three giants, with the law on their side, was opposed young Ishmael, with nothing but justice on his side. Bad lookout for justice! Well, so it was in that great encounter already alluded to between Brian and Ivanhoe.

Mr. Wiseman, for the plaintiff, opened the case. He was a great, big, bald-headed man, who laid down the law as a blacksmith hammers an anvil, in a clear, forcible, resounding manner, leaving the defense—as everybody declared—not a leg to stand upon!

"Oh, Mr. Worth! it is all over with me, and I shall die!" whispered Mrs. Walsh, in deadly terror.

"Have patience! his speech does not impress the court as it does you—they are used to him."

Witnesses were called, to prove as well as they could from a bad set of facts what an excellent husband and father the plaintiff had been; how affectionate, how anxious, how zealous he was for the happiness of his wife and children! leaving it to be inferred that nothing on earth but her own evil tendencies instigated the wife to withdraw herself and children from his protection!

"Heaven and earth, Mr. Worth! did you ever hear anything like that? They manage to tell the literal truth, but so pervert it that it is worse than the worst falsehood!" exclaimed Mrs. Walsh, in a low but indignant tone.

"Aye," answered Ishmael, who sat, pencil and tablets in hand, taking notes—"aye! 'a lie that is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies.' But the court is accustomed to such witnesses; they do not receive so much credit as you or they think."

Ishmael did not cross-examine these witnesses; the great mass of rebutting testimony that he could bring forward, he knew must overwhelm them. So when the last witness for the plaintiff had been examined, he whispered a few cheering words to the trembling woman by his side, and rose for the defendant. Now, whenever a new barrister takes the floor for the first time, there is always more or less curiosity and commotion among the old fogies of the forum.

What will he turn out to be? that is the question. All eyes were turned toward him.

They saw a tall, broad-shouldered, full-chested young man, who stood, with a certain dignity, looking upon the notes that he held in his hand; and when he lifted his stately head to address the court, they saw that his face was not only beautiful in the noble mold of the features, but almost divine from the inspiring soul within.

Among the eyes that gazed upon him were those of the three giants of the law whom he had now to oppose. They stared at him mercilessly—no doubt with the intention of staring him down. But they did not even confuse him; for the simple reason that he did not look toward them. They might stare themselves stone blind, but they would have no magnetic influence upon that strong, concentrated, earnest soul!

Ishmael was not in the least embarrassed in standing up to address the court for the first time, simply because he was not thinking of himself or his audience, but of his client, and her case as he wished to set it forth; and he was not looking at the spectators but alternately at the court and at the notes in his hand.

He did not make a long opening like the Giant Wiseman

had done; for he wished to reserve himself for the closing speech, in final reply to the others. He just made a plain statement of his client's case as it is in part known to the reader.

He told the court how, at the age of fifteen, she had been decoyed from her mother's house and married by the plaintiff, a man more than twice her age; how when she had come into her property he had squandered it all by a method that he, the plaintiff, called speculation, but that others called gambling; how he had then left her in poverty and embarrassment and with one child to support; how he remained away two years, during which time her friends had set his wife up in business in a little fancy store. She was prospering when he came back, took up his abode with her, got into debt which he could not pay, and when all her stock and furniture was seized to satisfy *his* creditors, he took himself off, once more, leaving her with two children. She was worse off than before; her friends grumbled, but once more came to her assistance, set her up a little book and news agency, the stock of which was nearly all purchased on credit, and told her plainly that if she permitted her husband to come and break up her business again, they would abandon and leave her to her fate. Notwithstanding this warning, when at the end of seven or eight months he came back again she received him again. He stayed with her thirteen months; and suddenly disappeared without bidding her good-by, leaving her within a few weeks of becoming the mother of a third child. A few days after his disappearance another execution was put into the house to satisfy a debt contracted by him, and everything was sold under the hammer. She was reduced to the last degree of poverty; her friends held themselves aloof, disgusted at what they termed her culpable weakness; she and her children suffered from cold and hunger; and during her subsequent illness, she and they must have starved or frozen but for the public charities, that would not let anyone in our midst perish from want of necessary food and fuel. When she recovered from her illness, one relative, a widow now present in court, had from her own narrow means supplied the money to rent and furnish a small schoolroom, and this most hapless of women was once more put in a way to earn daily bread for herself and children. Nine years passed during which she enjoyed a respite from the persecutions of the plaintiff. In these nine years by strict attention to business, untiring industry, she not only paid off the debt owed to her aged relative; but she bought a little cottage and garden in a cheap suburb, and furnished the house and stocked the garden. She was now living a laborious but contented life and rearing her children in comfort. But now at the end of nine years comes

back the plaintiff. Her husband? No, her enemy! for he comes, not as he pretends to cherish and protect; but as he ever came before, to lay waste and destroy! How long could it be supposed that the mother would be able to keep the roof over the heads of her children, if the plaintiff were permitted to enter beneath it? if the court did not protect her home against his invasion, he would again bring ruin and desolation within its walls! They would prove, by competent witnesses, every point in this statement of the defendant's case; and then he would demand for his client, not only that she should be secured in the undisturbed possession of her children, her property and her earnings; but that the plaintiff should be required to contribute an annual sum of money to the support of the defendant and her children and to give security for its payment.

"That's 'carrying the war into Africa' with a vengeance," whispered Walsh to his counsel as Ishmael concluded his address.

He then called the witnesses for the defendant. They were numerous and of the highest respectability. Among them were the pastor of her parish, her family physician and many of the patrons of her school.

They testified to the facts stated by her attorney.

The three giants did their duty in the cross-examining line of business. Wiseman cross-examined in a stern manner; Berners in an insinuating way; and Vivian in a sarcastic style; but the only effect of their forensic skill was to bring out the truth from the witnesses, more clearly, strongly and impressively.

When the last witness for the defendant had been permitted to leave the stand Wiseman arose to address the court on behalf of the plaintiff. He spoke in his own peculiar sledge-hammer style, sonorously striking the anvil and ringing all the changes upon law, custom, precedent and so forth that always gave the children into the custody of the father. And he ended by demanding that the children be at once delivered over to his client.

He was followed by Berners, who had charge of the eloquence "business" of that stage, and dealt in pathos, tears, white pocket handkerchiefs and poetical quotations. He drew a most heartrending picture of the broken-spirited husband and father, rejected by an unforgiving wife and ill-conditioned children, becoming a friendless and houseless wanderer over the wide world; in danger of being driven, by despair, to madness and suicide! He compared the plaintiff to Byron, whose poetry he liberally quoted. And he concluded by imploring the court, with tears in his eyes, to intervene and save his unhappy client from the gulf of perdition to which his im-

placable wife would drive him. And he sank down in his seat utterly overwhelmed by his feelings and holding a drift of white cambric to his face.

"Am I such an out and out monster, Mr. Worth?" whispered Mrs. Walsh, in dismay.

Ishmael smiled.

"Everybody knows Berners;—his 'madness' and 'suicide,' his 'gulf of perdition' and his white cambric pocket handkerchief are recognized institutions. See! the judge is actually smiling over it."

Mr. Vivian arose to follow—he did up the genteel comedy; he kept on hand a supply of "little jokes" gleaned from Joe Miller, current comic literature, dinner tables, clubs, etc.—"little jokes" of which every point in his discourse continually reminded him, though his hearers could not always perceive the association of ideas. This gentleman was very facetious over family jars, which reminded him of a "little joke," which he told; he was also very witty upon the subject of matrimonial disputes in particular, which reminded him of another "little joke," which he also told; but most of all, he was amused at the caprice of womankind, who very often rather *liked* to be compelled to do as they pleased, which reminded him of a third "little joke." And if the court should allow the defendant the exclusive possession of her children and a separate maintenance, it was highly probable that she would not thank them for their trouble, but would take the first opportunity of voluntarily reconciling herself to her husband and giving him back herself, her home and her children, which would be equal to any "little joke" he ever heard in his life, etc., etc., etc.

The audience was all in a broad grin. Even Mrs. Walsh, with her lips of "lifelong sadness," smiled.

"You may smile at him," said Ishmael, "and so will I, since I do not at all doubt the issue of this trial; but for all that, joker as he is, he is the most serious opponent that we have. I would rather encounter half a dozen each of Wisemans and Berners than one Vivian. Take human nature in general, it can be more easily laughed than reasoned or persuaded in or out of any measure. People would rather laugh than weep or reflect. Wiseman tries to make them reflect, which they won't do; Berners tries to make them weep, which they can't do; but Vivian with his jokes makes them laugh, which they like to do. And so, he has joked himself into a very large practice at the Washington bar."

But the facetious barrister was bringing his speech to a close, with a brilliant little joke that eclipsed all the preceding ones and set the audience in a roar. And when the laughter had subsided, he finally ended by expressing a hope

that the court would not so seriously disappoint and so cruelly wrong the defendant as by giving a decision in her favor.

CHAPTER LVII.

ISHMAEL waited a few minutes for the excitement produced by the last address to subside—the last address that in its qualities and effects had resembled champagne;—sparkling but transient, effervescent but evanescent. And when order had been restored Ishmael arose amid a profound silence to make his maiden speech, for the few opening remarks he had made in initiating the defense could scarcely be called a speech. Once more then all eyes were fixed upon him in expectancy. And, as before, he was undisturbed by these regards because he was unconscious of them; and he was calm because he was not thinking of himself or of the figure he was making, but of his client and her cause. He did not care to impress the crowd, he only wished to affect the court. So little did he think of the spectators in the room, that he did not observe that Judge Merlin, Claudia and Beatrice were among them, seated in a distant corner—Judge Merlin and Claudia were watching him with curiosity, and Bee with the most affectionate anxiety. His attention was confined to the judges, the counsel, his client and the memoranda in his hand. He had a strong confidence in the justice of his cause; perfect faith in the providence of God; and sanguine hopes of success.

True, he had arrayed against him an almost overpowering force: the husband of his client; and the three great guns of the bar—Wiseman, Berners and Vivian, with law, custom and precedent. But with him stood the angels of Justice and Mercy, invisible, but mighty; and, over all, the Omnipotent God, unseen, but all-seeing!

Ishmael possessed the minor advantages of youth, manly beauty, a commanding presence, a gracious smile, and a sweet, deep, sonorous voice. He was besides a new orator among them, with a fresh, original style.

He was no paid attorney; it was not his pocket that was interested, but his sympathies; his whole heart and soul were in the cause that he had embraced, and he brought to bear upon it all the genius of his powerful mind.

I would like to give you the whole of this great speech that woke up the Washington court from its state of semisomnolency and roused it to the sense of the unjust and cruel things it sometimes did when talking in its sleep. But I have only time and space to glance at some of its points; and if anyone wishes to see more of it, it may be found in the published works of the great jurist and orator.

He began to speak with modest confidence and in clear, concise and earnest terms. He said that the court had heard from the learned counsel that had preceded him a great deal of law, sentiment and wit. From him they should now hear of justice, mercy and truth!

He reverted to the story of the woman's wrongs, sufferings and struggles, continued through many years; he spoke of her love, patience and forbearance under the severest trials; he dwelt upon the prolonged absence of her husband, prolonged through so many weary years, and the false position of the forsaken wife, a position so much worse than widowhood, inasmuch as it exposed her not only to all the evils of poverty, but to suspicion, calumny and insult. But he bade them note how the woman had passed through the fire, unharmed! how she had fought the battle of life bravely and come out victoriously; how she had labored on in honorable industry for years until she had secured a home for herself and little girls; he spoke plainly of the arrival of the fugitive husband as the coming of the destroyer who had three times before laid waste her home; he described the terror and distress his very presence in the city had brought to that little home; the flight of the mother with her children, and her agony of anxiety to conceal them; he dwelt upon the cruel position of the woman whose natural protector had become her natural enemy; he reminded the court that it had required the mother to take her trembling little ones from their place of safety and concealment and to bring them forward; and now that they were here he felt a perfect confidence that the court would extend the ægis of its authority over these helpless ones, since that would be the only shield they could have under Heaven. He spoke noble words in behalf not only of his client, but of woman—woman, loving, feeble and oppressed from the beginning of time—woman, hardly dealt with by *nature* in the first place, and by the laws, made by her natural lover and protector, *man*, in the second place. Perhaps it was because he knew himself to be the *son of a woman only*, even as his Master had been before him, that he poured so much of awaking, convicting and condemning fire, force and weight into this part of his discourse. He uttered thoughts and feelings upon this subject, original and startling at that time, but which have since been quoted, both in the Old and New World, and have had power to modify those cruel laws which at that period made woman, despite her understanding intellect, an idiot, and despite her loving heart, a chattel—*in the law*.

It had been the time-honored prerogative and the invariable custom of the learned judges of this court, to go to sleep, during the pleadings of the lawyers; but upon this occasion they did not indulge in an afternoon nap, I assure you!

He next reviewed the testimony of the witnesses of the plaintiff; complimented them on the ingenuity they had displayed in making "the worst appear the better cause," by telling half the truth and ignoring the other half; but warned the court at the same time

"That a lie which is half a truth, is ever the blackest of lies,
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright;
But a lie which is part a truth, is a harder matter to fight."

Then he reviewed in turn the speeches of the counsel for the plaintiff;—first that of Wiseman, the ponderous law expounder, which he answered with quite as much law and a great deal more equity; secondly, that of Berners, the tear pumper, the false sentiment of which he exposed and criticised; and thirdly that of Vivian, the laugh provoker, with which he dealt the most severely of all, saying that one who could turn into jest the most sacred affections and most serious troubles of domestic life, the heart's tragedy, the household wreck before them, could be capable of telling funny stories at his father's funeral, uttering good jokes over his mother's coffin.

He spoke for two hours, warming, glowing, rising with his subject, until his very form seemed to dilate in grandeur, and his face grew radiant as the face of an archangel; and those who heard seemed to think that his lips like those of the prophet of old had been touched with fire from Heaven! Under the inspiration of the hour, he spoke truths new and startling then, but which have since resounded through the senate chambers of the world, changing the laws of the nations in regard to woman.

Nora, do you see your son? Oh! was it not well worth while to have loved, suffered and died, only to have given him to the world?

It was a complete success! All his long, patient, painful years of struggle were rewarded now! It was one splendid leap from obscurity to fame!

The giants attempted to answer him, but it was of no use! After the freshness, the fire, the force, the heart, soul and life in Ishmael's utterances, their old, familiar, well-worn styles in which the same arguments, pathos, wit that had done duty in so many other cases was paraded again, only bored their hearers. In vain Wiseman appealed to reason; Berners to feeling; and Vivian to humor; they would not do! the court had often heard all that before and grown heartily tired of it. Wiseman's wisdom was found to be foolishness; Berners' pathos laughable; and Vivian's humor grievous.

The triumvirate of the Washington bar were dethroned and Prince Ishmael reigned in their stead!

A few hours later the decision of the court was made known. It had granted all that the young advocate had asked for his client—the exclusive possession of her children, her property, and her earnings and also alimony from her husband.

As Ishmael passed out of the court amid the tearful thanks of the mother and her children, and the proud congratulations of honest Reuben and Hannah, he neared the group composed of Judge Merlin, Claudia, and Beatrice.

Judge Merlin looked smiling and congratulatory; he shook hands with the young barrister, saying:

“Well, Ishmael! you have rather waked up the world to-day, haven’t you?”

Bee looked perfectly radiant with joy! Her fingers closed spasmodically on the hand that Ishmael offered her, and she exclaimed, a little incoherently:

“Oh, Ishmael, I always knew you could. I am so happy!”

“Thank you, dearest Bee! Under Divine Providence I owe a great deal of my success to-day to your sympathy.”

Claudia did not speak; she was deadly pale and cold; her face was like marble and her hand like ice as she gave it to Ishmael. She had always appreciated and loved him, against her will; but now, in this hour of his triumph, when he had discovered to the world his real power and worth, her love rose to an anguish of longing that she knew her pride must forever deny; and so when Ishmael took her hand and looked in her face for the words of sympathy that his heart was hungering to receive from her of all the world, she could not speak.

Ishmael passed out with his friends. When he had gone, a stranger who had been watching him with the deepest interest, during the whole course of the trial, now came forward, and, with an agitation impossible to conceal, hastily inquired:

“Judge Merlin! for Heaven’s sake! who is that young man?”

“Eh! what! Brudenell! you here! When did you arrive?”

“This morning! But for the love of Heaven who is that young man?”

“Who? why the most talented young barrister of the day—a future chief justice, attorney general, President of the United States, for aught I know! It looks like it! for whatever may be the aspirations of the boy, his intellect and will are sure to realize them!”

“Yes, but who is he? what is his name? who were his parents? where was he born?” demanded Herman Brudenell, excitedly.

“Why, the Lord bless my soul alive, man! He is a self-

made barrister; his name is Ishmael Worth; his mother was a poor weaver girl named Nora Worth; his father was an unknown scoundrel; he was born at a little hut near— Why, Brudenell, *you* ought to know all about it—near Brudenell Hall!"

"Heaven and earth!"

"What is the matter?"

"The close room—the crowd—and this oppression of the chest that I have had so many years!" gasped Herman Brudenell.

"Get into my carriage and come home with us. Come—I will take no denial! The hotels are overcrowded. We can send for your luggage. Come!"

"Thank you; I think I will."

"Claudia! Beatrice! come forward, my dears. Here is Mr. Brudenell."

Courtesies were exchanged, and they all went out and entered the carriage.

"I will introduce you to this young man, who has so much interested you, and all the world, in fact, I suppose. He is living with us; and he will be a lion from to-day, I assure you," said the judge, as soon as they were all seated.

"Thank you! I was interested in—in those two poor sisters. One died—what has become of the other?"

"She married my overseer, Gray; they are doing well. They are in the city on a visit at present, stopping at the 'Farmer's,' opposite the Centre Market."

"Who educated this young man?"

"Himself!"

"Did his unknown father make no provision for him?"

"None—the rascal! The boy was as poor as poverty could make him; but he worked for his own living from the time he was seven years old."

Herman had feared as much, for he doubted the check he had written and left for Hannah had ever been presented and cashed, for in the balancing of his bank book he never saw it among the others.

Meanwhile Ishmael had parted with his friends and gone home to the Washington House. He knew that he had had a glorious success; but he took no vain credit to himself; he was only happy that his service had been a free offering to a good cause; and very thankful that it had been crowned with victory. And when he reached home, he went up into his little chamber, knelt down in humble gratitude, and rendered all the glory to God!

CHAPTER LVIII.

WHEN the carriage containing Judge Merlin, Claudia, Beatrice and Mr. Brudenell reached the Washington House the party separated in the hall; the ladies went each to her own chamber to dress for dinner, and Judge Merlin called a servant to show Mr. Brudenell to a spare room, and then went to his own apartment.

When Herman Brudenell had dismissed his attendant and found himself alone he sat down in deep thought.

Since the death of Nora he had been a wanderer over the face of the earth. The revenues of his estate had been mostly paid over to his mother for the benefit of herself and her daughters, yet had scarcely been sufficient for the pride, vanity and extravagance of those foolish women, who, living in Paris and introduced into court circles by the American Minister, aped the style of the wealthiest among the French aristocracy, and indulged in the most expensive establishment, equipage, retinue, dress, jewelry, balls, *et cetera*, in the hope of securing alliances among the old nobility of France.

They might as well have gambled for thrones. The princes, dukes, marquises and counts drank their wines, ate their dinners, danced at their balls, kissed their hands, and—*laughed at them!*

The reason was this: the Misses Brudenell, though well born, pretty and accomplished, were not wealthy, and were even suspected of being heavily in debt because of all this show!

And I would here inform my ambitious American readers, who go abroad in search of titled husbands whom they cannot find at home, that what was going on in Paris *then* is going on in all the old world capitals *now*; and that *now*, when foreign noblemen marry American girls, it is because the former *want* money and the latter *have* it. If there is any exception to this rule, I, for one, never heard of it.

And so the Misses Brudenell, failing to marry into the nobility, were not married at all.

The expenditures of the mother and daughters in this speculation were enormous, so much so that at length Herman Brudenell, reckless as he was, became alarmed at finding himself on the very verge of insolvency!

He had signed so many blank checks, which his mother and sisters had filled up with figures so much higher than he had reckoned upon, that at last his Paris bankers had written to him informing him that his account had been so long and so much overdrawn that they had been obliged to decline cashing his last checks.

It was this that had startled Herman Brudenell out of his lethargy and goaded him to look into his affairs. After examining his account with his Paris banker with very unsatisfactory results, he determined to retrench his own personal expenses, to arrange his estates upon the most productive plan, and to let out Brudenell Hall.

He wrote to the Countess of Hurstmonceux requesting her to vacate the premises, and to his land agent instructing him to let the estate.

In due course of time he received answers to both his letters. That of the countess we have already seen; that of the land agent informed him of the vast improvement of the estate during the residence of the Countess of Hurstmonceux upon it, and of the accumulation of its revenues, and finally of the large sum placed to his credit in the local bank by her ladyship.

This sum, of course, every sentiment of honor forbade Herman Brudenell from appropriating. He therefore caused it to be withdrawn and deposited with Lady Hurstmonceux's London bankers.

Soon after this he received notice that Brudenell Hall, stocked and furnished as it was, had been let to Mr. Middleton.

The accumulated revenues of the estate he devoted to paying his mother's debts, and the current revenues to her support, warning her at the same time of impending embarrassments unless her expenses were retrenched.

But his warning was unheeded, and the folly and extravagance of his mother and sisters were unabated. Like all other desperate gamblers, the heavier their losses the greater became their stakes; they went on, living in the best hotels, keeping the most expensive servants, driving the purest blooded horses, wearing the richest dresses and the rarest jewels, giving the grandest balls, and—to use a common but strong phrase—"going it with a rush!" All in the desperate hope of securing for the young ladies wealthy husbands from among the titled aristocracy.

At length came another crisis; and once more Herman Brudenell was compelled to intervene between them and ruin. This he did at a vast sacrifice of property.

He wrote and gave Mr. Middleton warning to leave Brudenell Hall at the end of the year, because, he said, that he himself wished to return thither.

He did return thither; but it was only to sell off, gradually and privately, all the stock on the home farm, all the plate, rich furniture, rare pictures, statues, vases and articles of *vertu*, in the house, and all the old plantation negroes—ancient servants of the family, who had lived for generations on the premises.

While he was at this work he instituted cautious inquiries about "one of the tenants, Hannah Worth, the weaver, who lived at Hill Hut, with her nephew"; and he learned that Hannah was prosperously married to Reuben Gray and had left the neighborhood with her nephew, who had received a good education from Mr. Middleton's family school. Brudenell subsequently received a letter from Mr. Middleton himself, recommending to his favorable notice "a young man, named Ishmael Worth, living on the Brudenell estates."

But as the youth had left the neighborhood with his relatives, and as Mr. Brudenell really hoped that he was well provided for by the large sum of money for which he had given Hannah a check on the day of his departure, and as he was overwhelmed with business cares, and lastly, as he dreaded rather than desired a meeting with his unknown son, he deferred seeking him out.

When Brudenell Hall was entirely dismantled, and all the furniture of the house, the stock of the farm and the negroes of the plantation, and all the land except the few acres immediately around the house, had been sold, and the purchase money realized, he returned to Paris, settled his mother's debts, and warning her that they had now barely sufficient to support them in moderate comfort, entreated her to return and live quietly at Brudenell Hall.

But no! "If they were poor, so much the more reason why the girls should marry rich," argued Mrs. Brudenell; and instead of retrenching her expenses, she merely changed the scene of her operations from Paris to London, forgetting the fact everyone else remembered, that her "girls," though still handsome, because well preserved, were now mature women of thirty-two and thirty-five. Herman promised to give them the whole proceeds of his property, reserving to himself barely enough to live on in the most economical manner. And he let Brudenell Hall once more, and took up his abode at a cheap watering place on the Continent, where he remained for years, passing his time in reading, fishing, boating and other idle seaside pastimes, until he was startled from his repose by a letter from his mother—a letter full of anguish, telling him that her younger daughter, Eleanor, had fled from home in company with a certain Captain Dugald, and that she had traced them to Liverpool, whence they had sailed for New York, and entreating him to follow and if possible save his sister.

Upon this miserable errand he had revisited his native country. He had found no such name as Dugald in any of the lists of passengers arrived within the specified time by any of the ocean steamers from Liverpool to New York, and no such name on any of the hotel books; so he left the matter

in the hands of a skillful detective, and came down to Washington, in the hope of finding the fugitives there.

On his first walk out he had been attracted by the crowd around the City Hall; had learned that an interesting trial was going on; and that some strange, new lawyer was making a great speech. He had gone in, and on turning his eyes toward the young barrister, had been thunderstruck on being confronted by what seemed to him the living face of Nora Worth, elevated to masculine grandeur. Those were Nora's lips, so beautiful in form, color and expression; Nora's splendid eyes, that blazed with indignation, or melted with pity, or smiled with humor; Nora's magnificent breadth of brow, spanning from temple to temple. He saw in these remarkable features so much of the likeness of Nora, that he failed to see, in the height of the forehead, the outline of the profile, and the occasional expression of the countenance, the striking likeness to himself.

He had been spellbound by this, and by the eloquence of the young barrister until the end of the speech, when he had hastened to Judge Merlin and demanded the name and history of the new legal light.

And the answer had confirmed the prophetic instincts of his heart—This rising star of the forum was Nora's son!

Nora's son, born in the depths of poverty and shame; panting from the hour of his birth for the very breath of life; working from the days of his infancy for daily bread; striving from the years of his boyhood for knowledge; struggling by the most marvelous series of persevering effort out of the slough of infamy into which he had been cast, to his present height of honor! Scarcely twenty-one years old and already recognized not only as the most gifted and promising young member of the bar, but as a rising power among the people!

How proud he, the childless man, would be to own his share in Nora's gifted son, if in doing so he could avoid digging up the old, cruel reproach, the old, forgotten scandal! How proud to hail Ishmael Worth as Ishmael Brudenell!

But this he knew could never, never be. Every principle of honor, delicacy and prudence forbade him now to interfere in the destiny of Nora's long-ignored and neglected but gifted and rising son! With what face could he, the decayed, impoverished, almost forgotten master of Brudenell Hall, go to this brilliant young barrister who had just made a splendid *début* and achieved a dazzling success and say to him:

“I am your father!”

And how should he explain such a relationship to the astonished young man? At making the dreadful confession he felt that he should be likely to drop at the feet of his own son!

No! Ishmael Worth must remain Ishmael Worth! If he

fulfilled the promise of his youth, it would not be his father's name, but his young mother's maiden name which would become illustrious, in his person!

And yet, from the first moment of his seeing Ishmael and identifying him as Nora's son, he felt an irresistible desire to meet him face to face, to shake hands with him, to talk with him, to become acquainted with him, to be friends with him!

It was this longing that urged Mr. Brudenell to accept Judge Merlin's invitation and accompany the latter home. And now in a few moments this longing would be gratified.

In the midst of all other troubled thoughts one question perplexed him. It was this:

What had become of the check he had given Hannah in the hour of his departure, years ago?

That it had never been presented and cashed two circumstances led him to fear. The first was that he had never seen it among those returned to him when his bank book had been made up; and the second was that Hannah herself had shared the bitter poverty of her nephew, and therefore could not have received and appropriated the money to her own uses.

As he had learned from the judge that Hannah was in Washington he resolved to seek a private interview with her and ascertain what had become of the check, and why, with the large sum of money it represented, she had neglected to use it and permitted herself and her nephew to suffer all the evils of the most abject poverty.

CHAPTER LIX.

WHILE Mr. Brudenell still ruminated over these affairs the second dinner bell rang and almost at the same moment Judge Merlin rapped and entered the chamber, with old-fashioned hospitality, to show his guest the way to the drawing-room.

"You feel better, I hope, Brudenell?" he inquired.

"Yes, thank you, judge."

"Come, then. We will go down. We are a little behind time at best this evening, upon account of our young friend's long-winded address. It was a splendid affair, though! Worth waiting to hear, was it not?" proudly inquired the judge as they descended the stairs.

They entered the drawing-room.

It was a family party that was assembled there, with the sole exception of the Viscount Vincent, who indeed had become a daily visitor, a recognized suitor of Miss Merlin, and almost one of their set.

As soon as Mr. Brudenell had paid his respects to each member of the family, Lord Vincent advanced frankly and cordinally to greet him as an old acquaintance, saying:

"I had just learned from Miss Merlin of your arrival! You must have left London very soon after I did?"

Before Mr. Brudenell could reply, Judge Merlin came up with Ishmael and said:

"Lord Vincent, excuse me!—Mr. Brudenell permit me—Mr. Worth, of the Washington Bar."

Herman Brudenell turned and confronted Ishmael Worth. And father and son stood face to face!

Herman's face was quivering with irrepressible yet unspeakable emotion; Ishmael's countenance was serene and smiling.

No faintest instinct warned Nora's son that he stood in the presence of his father! He saw before him a tall, thin, fair-complexioned, gentlemanly person, whose light hair was slightly silvered, and whose dark-brown eyes, in such strange contrast to the blond hair, were bent with interest upon him.

"I am happy to make your acquaintance, young gentleman. Permit me to offer you my congratulations upon your very decided success," said Mr. Brudenell, giving his hand.

Ishmael bowed.

"Brudenell, will you take my daughter in to dinner?" said Judge Merlin, seeing that Lord Vincent had already given his arm to Mrs. Middleton.

Herman, glad to be relieved from a position that was beginning to overcome his self-possession, bowed to Miss Merlin, who smilingly accepted his escort.

Judge Merlin drew Bee's arm within his own and followed. And Mr. Middleton, with a comic smile, crooked his elbow to Ishmael, who laughed instead of accepting it, and those two walking side by side brought up the rear.

That dinner passed very much as other dinners of the same class. Judge Merlin was cordial, Mr. Middleton facetious, Lord Vincent gracious, Mr. Brudenell silent and apparently abstracted, and Ishmael was attentive—a listener rather than a speaker. The ladies as usual at dinner parties, where the conversation turns upon politics, were rather in the background, and took an early opportunity of withdrawing from the table, leaving the gentlemen to finish their political discussion over their wine.

The latter, however, did not linger long; but soon followed the ladies to the drawing-room, where coffee was served. And soon after the party separated for the evening. Herman Brudenell withdrew to his chamber with one idea occupying him—his son!

Since the death of Nora had paralyzed his affections, Herman Brudenell had loved no creature on earth, until he met

her son upon this evening. Now the frozen love of years melted and flowed into one strong, impetuous stream toward him—her son—*his* son! Oh! that he might dare to claim him!

It was late when Mr. Brudenell fell asleep—so late that he overslept himself in the morning. And when at last he awoke and rang for his hot water, he was surprised to find that it was ten o'clock.

But Judge Merlin's house was "Liberty Hall." His guests breakfasted when they got up, and got up when they awoke. It was one of his crotchets never to have anyone awakened. He said that when people had had sleep enough, they would awaken of themselves, and to awaken them before that was an injurious interference with nature. And his standing order in regard to *himself* was, that no one should ever rouse *him* from sleep unless the house was on fire, or some one at the point of death! And woe betide anyone who should disregard this order!

So Mr. Brudenell had been allowed to sleep until he woke up at ten o'clock, and when he went downstairs at eleven he found a warm breakfast awaiting him, and the little house-wife, Bee, presiding over the coffee, muffins and broiled chickens.

As Bee poured out his coffee she informed him, in answer to his remarks, that all the members of the family had breakfasted and gone about their several affairs. The judge and Ishmael had gone to court, and Mrs. Middleton and Claudia on a shopping expedition; but that they would all be back at the luncheon hour, which was two o'clock.

CHAPTER LX.

WHEN breakfast was over, Mr. Brudenell took his hat and walked down the avenue to Seventh street, and to the "Farmer's" in search of Hannah.

In answer to his inquiries he was told that she was in and he was desired to walk up to her room. A servant preceded him, opened a door, and said:

"Here is a ge'man to see you, mum."

And Mr. Brudenell entered.

Hannah looked, dropped the needlework she held in her hand, started up, overturning the chair, and with a stare of consternation, exclaimed:

"The Lord deliver us! is it you? and hasn't the devil got you yet, Herman Brudenell?"

"It is I, Hannah," he answered, dropping without invitation into the nearest seat.

"And what on earth have you come for, after all these years?" she asked, continuing to stare at him.

"To see *you*, Hannah."

"And what, in the name of common sense, do you want to see *me* for?—I don't want to see *you*; and that I tell you plainly; for I'd just as lief see old Nick!"

"Hannah," said Herman Brudenell, with an unusual assumption of dignity, "I have come to speak to you about—Are you quite alone?" he suddenly broke off and inquired, cautiously glancing around the room.

"What's that to you? What can you have to say to me that you could not shout from the housetop? Yes, I'm alone, if you must know!"

"Then I wish to speak to you about my son."

"Your—what?" demanded Hannah, with a frown as black as midnight.

"My son," repeated Herman Brudenell, with emphasis.

"Your son? What son? I didn't know you had a son! What should I know about your son?"

"Woman, stop this! I speak of my son, Ishmael Worth! whom I met for the first time in the court room yesterday! And I ask you how it has fared with him these many years?" demanded Mr. Brudenell, sternly, for he was beginning to lose patience with Hannah.

"Oh—h! So you met Ishmael Worth in the court room yesterday, just when he had proved himself to be the most talented man there, did you? That accounts for it all! I understand it now! You could leave him in his helpless, impoverished, orphaned infancy to perish! You could utterly neglect him, letting him suffer with cold and hunger and sickness for years and years and years! And now that, by the blessing of Almighty God, he has worked himself up out of that horrible pit into the open air of the world; and now that from being a poor, despised outcast babe he has risen to be a man of note among men; *now*, forsooth, you want to claim him as your son! Herman Brudenell, I always hated you, but now I scorn you! Twenty odd years ago I would have killed you, only I didn't want to kill your soul as well as your body, nor likewise to be hanged for you! And now I would shy this stick of wood at your head only that I don't want Reuben Gray to have the mortification of seeing his wife took up for assault! But I hate you, Herman Brudenell! And I despise you! There! take yourself out of my sight!"

Mr. Brudenell stamped impatiently and said:

"Hannah, you speak angrily, and therefore, of course, foolishly. What good could accrue to me, or to him, by my claiming Ishmael as my son, unless I could prove a marriage with his mother? It would only unearth the old, cruel, unmerited

scandal now forgotten! No, Hannah; to *you* only, who are the sole living depository of the secret, will I solace myself by speaking of him as my son! You reproach me with having left him to perish. I did not so. I left in your hands a check for several—I forget now how many—thousand dollars to be used for his benefit. And I always hoped that he was well provided for until yesterday, when Judge Merlin, little thinking the interest I had in the story, gave me a sketch of Ishmael's early sufferings and struggles. And now I ask you what became of that check?"

"That check? What check? What in the world do you mean?"

"The check for several thousand dollars which I gave you on the day of my departure, to be used for Ishmael's benefit."

"Well, Herman Brudenell! I always thought, with all your faults, you were still a man of truth; but after this—!"

And Hannah finished by lifting her hands and eyes in horror!

"Hannah, you do severely try my temper, but in memory of all your kindness to my son—"

"Oh! I wasn't kind to him! I was as bad to him as *you* and all the rest! I wished him dead and neglected him!"

"You did!"

"Of course! Could anybody expect *me* to care more for him than his own father did? Yes! I wished him dead and neglected him, because I thought he had no right to be in the world and would be better out of it! So did everyone else! But he sucked his little, skinny thumb, and looked alive at us with his big, bright eyes, and lived in defiance of everybody! And only see what he has lived to be! But it is the good Lord's doings and not mine, and not yours, Herman Brudenell, so don't thank me any more for kindness that I never showed to Ishmael, and don't tell any more bragging lies about the checks for thousands of dollars that you never left him!"

Again Herman Brudenell stamped impatiently, frowned, bit his lips and said:

"You shall not goad me to anger with the two-edged sword of your tongue, Hannah! You are unjust, because you are utterly mistaken in your premises! I *did* leave that check of which I speak! And I wish to know what became of it, that it was not used for the support and education of Ishmael. Listen, now, and I will bring the whole circumstance to your recollection."

And Herman Brudenell related in detail all the little incidents connected with his drawing of the check, ending with:

"Now don't you remember, Hannah?"

Hannah looked surprised, and said:

"Yes, but was *that* little bit of dirty white paper, tore out of an old book, worth all that money?"

"Yes! after I had drawn a check upon it!"

"I didn't know! I didn't understand! I was sort o' dazed with grief, I suppose."

"But what became of the paper, Hannah?"

"Mrs. Jones lit the candle with it!"

"Oh! Hannah!"

"Was the money all lost? entirely lost because that little bit of paper was burnt?"

"To you and to Ishmael it was, of course, since you never received it; but to me it was not, since it was never drawn from the bank."

"Well, then, Mr. Brudenell, since the money was not lost, I do not so much care if the check *was* burnt! I should not have used it for myself, or Ishmael, anyhow! Though I am glad to know that you did not neglect him, and leave him to perish in destitution, as I supposed you had! I am very glad that you took measures for his benefit, although he never profited by them, and I never would have let him do so! Still it is pleasant to think that you did your duty; and I am sorry I was so unjust to you, Mr. Brudenell."

"Say no more of that, Hannah! Let us talk of my son. Remember that it is only to you that I can talk of him. Tell me all about his infancy and childhood. Tell me little anecdotes of him. I want to know more about him than the judge could tell me! I know old women love to gossip at great length of old times, so gossip away, Hannah! tell me everything! You shall have a most interested listener!"

"Old women,' indeed! Not so very much older than yourself, Mr. Herman Brudenell! if it comes to that! But anyways, if Reuben don't see as I am old, *you* needn't hit me in the teeth with it!" snapped Mrs. Gray.

"Hannah! Hannah! what a temper you have got, to be sure! It is well Reuben is as patient as Job!"

"It is enough to rouse any woman's temper to be called old to her very face!"

"So it is, Hannah; I admit it, and beg your pardon! But nothing was farther from my thoughts than to offend you! I feel old myself—very old, and so I naturally think of the companions of my youth as old also. And now, will you talk to me about my son?"

"Well, yes, I will," answered Hannah, and her tongue being loosened upon the subject, she gave Mr. Brudenell all the incidents and anecdotes with which the reader is already acquainted and a great many more with which I could not cumber this story.

While she was still "gossiping" and Herman listening, steps were heard without and the door opened and Reuben Gray entered, smiling and radiant, and leading two robust children—a boy and a girl—each with a little basket of early fruit in hand.

On seeing a stranger Reuben Gray took off his hat, and the children stopped short, put their fingers in their mouths and stared.

"Reuben, have you forgotten our old landlord, Mr. Herman Brudenell?" inquired Hannah.

"Why, law, so it is! I'm main glad to see you, sir! I hope I find you well!" exclaimed Reuben, beaming all over with welcome, as Mr. Brudenell arose and shook hands with him, replying:

"Quite well, and very happy to see you, Gray."

"John and Mary, where are your manners? Take your fingers out of your mouths this minute!—I'm quite ashamed of you!—and bow to the gentleman!" said Hannah, admonishing her offspring.

"Whose fine children are these?" inquired Mr. Brudenell, drawing the shy little ones to him.

Reuben's honest face glowed all over with pride and joy as he answered:

"They are *ours*, sir! they are indeed! though you mightn't think it, to look at them and us! And Ishmael—that is our nephew, sir—and though he is now Mr. Worth, and a splendid lawyer, he won't turn agin his plain kin, nor hear to our calling of him anythink else *but* Ishmael; and after making his great speech yesterday, actilly walked right out'n the court room, afore all the people, arm in arm long o' Hannah!—Ishmael, as I was asaying, tells me as how this boy, John, have got a good head, and would make a fine scollard, and how, by and by, he means to take him for a stoodient, and make a lawyer on him. And as for the girl, sir—why, law! look at her! you can see for yourself, sir, as she will have all her mother's beauty."

And Reuben, with a broad, brown hand laid benignantly upon each little head, smiled down upon the children of his age with all the glowing effulgence of an autumnal noonday sun shining down upon the late flowers.

But—poor Hannah's "beauty!"

Mr. Brudenell repressed the smile that rose to his lips, for he felt that the innocent illusions of honest affection were far too sacred to be laughed at.

And with some well-deserved compliments to the health and intelligence of the boy and girl, he kissed them both, shook hands with Hannah and Reuben, and went away.

He turned his steps toward the City Hall, with the inten-

tion of going into the court room and comforting his soul by watching the son whom he durst not acknowledge.

And as he walked thither, how he envied humble Reuben Gray his parental happiness!

CHAPTER LXI.

MR. BRUDENELL found Ishmael in the anteroom of the court in close conversation with a client, an elderly, careworn woman in widow's weeds. He caught a few words of her discourse to which Ishmael appeared to be listening with sympathy.

"Yes, sir, Maine; we belong to Bangor. He went to California some years ago and made money. And he was on his way home and got as far as this city, where he was taken ill with the cholera, at his brother's house, where he died before I could get to him; leaving three hundred thousand dollars, all in California gold, which his brother refuses to give up, denying all knowledge of it. It is robbery of the widow and orphan, sir, and nothing short of that!"—she was saying.

"If this is as you state it, it would seem to be a case for a detective policeman and a criminal prosecution, rather than for an attorney and a civil suit," said Ishmael.

"So it ought to be, sir, for he deserves punishment; but I have been advised to sue him and I mean to do it, if you will take my case. But if you do take it, sir, it must be on conditions."

"Yes. What are they?"

"Why, if you do not recover the money, you will not receive any pay; but if you *do* recover the money, you will receive a very large share of it yourself, as a compensation for your services and your risk."

"I cannot take your case on these terms, madam; I cannot accept a conditional fee," said Ishmael, gently.

"Then what shall I do?" exclaimed the widow, bursting into tears. "I have no money and shall not have any until I get that! And how can I get that unless I sue for it? Or how sue for it, unless you are willing to take the risk? *Do*, sir, try it! It will be no risk, after all; you will be sure to gain it!"

"It is not the risk that I object to, madam," said Ishmael, very gently, "but it is *this*:—to make my fee out of my case would appear to me a sort of professional gambling, from which I should shrink."

"Then, Heaven help me, what shall I do?" exclaimed the widow, weeping afresh.

"Do not distress yourself. I will call and see you this afternoon. And if your case is what you represent it to be, I will undertake to conduct it," said Ishmael. And in that moment he made up his mind that if he should find the widow's cause a just one, he would once more make a free offering of his services.

The new client thanked him, gave her address and departed.

Ishmael turned to go into the court room and found himself confronted with Mr. Brudenell.

"Good morning, Mr. Worth! I see you have another client already."

"A possible one, sir," replied Ishmael, smiling with satisfaction as he shook hands with Mr. Brudenell.

"A poor one, you mean! Poor widows with claims always make a prey of young lawyers, who are supposed to be willing to plead for nothing, rather than not plead at all! And it is all very well, as it gives the latter an opening. But you are not one of these briefless lawyers; you have already made your mark in the world, and so you must not permit these female forlornites that haunt the courts to consume all your time and attention."

"Sir," said Ishmael, gravely and fervently, "I owe so much to God—so much more than I can ever hope to pay, that at least I must show my gratitude to Him by working for His poor!—Do you not think that is only right, sir?"

And Ishmael looked into the face of this stranger, whom he had seen but once before, with a singular longing for his approval.

"Yes! I do! my—I do, Mr. Worth!" replied Brudenell with emotion, as they entered the court room together.

Late that afternoon Ishmael kept his appointment with the widow Cobham, and their consultation ended in Ishmael's acceptance of her brief. Other clients also came to him and soon his hands were full of business.

As the Supreme Court had risen, and Judge Merlin had little or no official business on hand, Ishmael's position in his office was almost a sinecure, and therefore the young man delicately hinted to his employer the propriety of a separation between them.

"No, Ishmael! I cannot make up my mind to part with you yet. It is true, as you say, that there is but little to do now; but recollect that for months past there has been a great deal to do, and you have done about four times as much work for me as I was entitled to expect of you. So that now you have earned the right to stay on with me to the end of the year, without doing any work at all."

"But, sir—"

"But I won't hear a word about your leaving us just yet,

Ishmael. I will hold you to your engagement, at least until the first of June, when we all return to Tanglewood; then, if you wish it, of course I will release you, as your professional duties will require your presence in the city. But while we remain in town, I will not consent to your leaving us, nor release you from your engagement," said the judge.

And Ishmael was made happy by this decision. It had been a point of honor with him, as there was so little to do, to offer to leave the judge's employment; but now that the offer had been refused, and he was held to his engagement, he was very much pleased to find himself obliged to remain under the same roof with Claudia.

Ah! sweet and fatal intoxication of her presence! he would not willingly tear himself away from it.

Meanwhile, this pleasure was but occasional and fleeting. He seldom saw Claudia except at the dinner hour.

Miss Merlin never now got up to breakfast with the family. Her life of fashionable dissipation was beginning to tell even on her youthful and vigorous constitution. Every evening she was out until a late hour, at some public ball, private party, concert, theater, lecture room, or some other place of amusement. The consequence was that she was always too tired to rise and breakfast with the family, whom she seldom joined until the two o'clock lunch. And at that hour Ishmael was sure to be at court, where the case of Cobham *versus* Hanley, in which Mr. Worth was counsel for the plaintiff, was going on. At the six o'clock dinner he daily met her, as I said, but that was always in public. And immediately after coffee she would go out, attended by Mrs. Middleton as chaperon and the Viscount Vincent as escort. And she would return long after Ishmael had retired to his room, so that he would not see her again until the next day at dinner. And so the days wore on.

Mr. Brudenell remained the guest of Judge Merlin. A strange affection was growing up between him and Ishmael Worth! Brudenell understood the secret of this affection; Ishmael did not. The father, otherwise childless, naturally loved the one gifted son of his youth, and loved him the more that he durst not acknowledge him. And Ishmael, in his genial nature, loved in return the stranger who showed so much affectionate interest in him. No one perceived the likeness that was said by the viscount to exist between the two except the viscount himself; and since he had seen them together he ceased to comment upon the subject.

Reuben Gray and his family had returned home, so that Mr. Brudenell got no further opportunity of talking with Hannah.

The Washington season, prolonged by an extra session of Congress, was at length drawing to a close; and it was finished

off with a succession of very brilliant parties. Ishmael Worth was now included in every invitation sent to the family of Judge Merlin, and in compliance with the urgent advice of the judge he accepted many of these invitations, and appeared in some of the most exclusive drawing-rooms in Washington, where his handsome person, polished manners and distinguished talents made him welcome.

But none among these brilliant parties equaled in splendor the ball given early in the season by the Merlins.

"And since no one has been able to eclipse my ball, I will eclipse it myself by a still more splendid one—a final grand display at the end of the season, like a final grand tableau at the close of a pantomime," said Claudia.

"My dear, you will ruin yourself," expostulated Mrs. Midleton.

"My aunt, I shall be a viscountess," replied Miss Merlin.

And preparations for the great party were immediately commenced. More than two hundred invitations were sent out. And the aid of the three great ministers of fashion—Vourienne, Devizac and Dureezie—were called in, and each was furnished with a *carte-blanche* as to expenses. And as to squander the money of the prodigal heiress was to illustrate their own arts, they availed themselves of the privilege in the freest manner.

For a few days the house was closed to visitors, and given up to suffer the will of the decorator Vourienne and his attendant magicians, who soon contrived to transform the sober mansion of the American judge into something very like the gorgeous palace of an Oriental prince. And as if they would not be prodigal enough if left to themselves, Claudia continually interfered to instigate them to new extravagances.

Meanwhile nothing was talked of in fashionable circles but the approaching ball, and the novelties it was expected to develop.

On the morning of the day, Vourienne and his imps having completed their fancy papering, painting and gilding, and put the finishing touches by festooning all the walls and ceilings, and wreathing all the gilded pillars, with a profusion of artificial flowers, at last evacuated the premises, just in time to allow Devizac and his army to march in for the purpose of laying the feast. These forces held possession of the supper room, kitchen and pantry for the rest of the evening, and prepared a supper which it would be vain to attempt to describe, since even the eloquent reporter of the *Republican Court Journal* failed to do it justice. A little later in the evening, Dureezie and his celebrated troupe arrived, armed with all the celebrated dances—waltzes, polkas, *et cetera*—then known, and one or two others composed expressly for this occasion.

And, when they had taken their places, Claudia and her party came down into the front drawing-room to be ready to receive the company.

On this occasion it was Miss Merlin's whim to dress with exceeding richness. She wore a robe of dazzling splendor—a fabric of the looms of India, a sort of gauze of gold, that seemed to be composed of woven sunbeams, and floated gracefully around her elegant figure and accorded well with her dark beauty. The bodice of this gorgeous dress was literally starred with diamonds. A coronet of diamonds flashed above her black ringlets, a necklace of diamonds rested upon her full bosom, and bracelets of the same encircled her rounded arms. Such a glowing, splendid, resplendent figure as she presented suggested the idea of a Mohammedan Sultana rather than that of a Christian maiden. But it was Miss Merlin's caprice upon this occasion to dazzle, bewilder and astonish.

Bee, who stood near her like a maid of honor to a queen, was dressed with her usual simplicity and taste, in a fine white crape, with a single white lily on her bosom.

Mrs. Middleton, standing also with Claudia, wore a robe of silver gray.

And this pure white on one side and pale gray on the other did but heighten the effect of Claudia's magnificent costume.

The fashionable hour for assembling at evening parties was then ten o'clock. By a quarter past ten the company began to arrive, and by eleven the rooms were quite full.

The Viscount Vincent arrived early and devoted himself to Miss Merlin, standing behind her chair like a lord in waiting.

Ishmael was also present with this group ostensibly in attendance upon Beatrice, but really and truly waiting every turn of Claudia's countenance or conversation.

While they were all standing, grouped in this way, to receive all comers, Judge Merlin approached, smiling, and accompanied by an officer in the uniform of the United States army, whom he presented in these words:

"Claudia, my love, I bring you an old acquaintance—a very old acquaintance—Captain Burge."

Claudia bowed as haughtily and distantly as it was possible to do; and then, without speaking, glanced inquiringly at her father as if to ask—"How came this person here?"

Judge Merlin replied to that mute question by saying:

"I was so lucky as to meet our young friend on the avenue to-day; he is but just arrived. I told him what was going on here this evening and begged him to waive ceremony and come to us. And he was so good as to take me at my word! Bee, my dear, don't you remember your old playmate, Alfred Burge?" said the judge, appealing for relief to his amiable niece.

Now Bee was too kind-hearted to hurt anyone's feelings, and yet too truthful to make professions she did not feel. She could not positively say that she was glad to see Alfred Burghe; but she could give him her hand and say:

"I hope that you are well, Mr. Burghe."

"Captain! Captain, my dear! he commands a company now! Lord Vincent permit me—Captain Burghe."

A haughty bow from the viscount and a reverential one from the captain acknowledged this presentation.

Then Mrs. Middleton kindly shook hands with the unwelcome visitor.

And finally Claudia unbent a little from her hauteur and condescended to address a few commonplace remarks to him. But at length her eyes flashed around upon Ishmael standing behind Bee.

"You are acquainted with Mr. Worth, I presume, Captain Burghe?" she inquired.

"I have not that honor," said Alfred Burghe, arrogantly.

"Then I will confer it upon you!" said Claudia, very gravely. "Mr. Worth, I hope you will permit me to present to you Captain Burghe. Captain Burghe, Mr. Worth of the Washington Bar."

Ishmael bowed with courtesy; but Alfred Burghe grew violently red in the face and with a short nod turned away.

"Captain Burghe has a bad memory, my lord!" said Claudia, turning to the viscount. "The gentleman to whom I have just presented him once saved his life at the imminent risk of his own! It is true the affair happened long ago, when they were both boys; but it seems to me that if anyone had exposed himself to a death by fire to rescue me from a burning building, I should remember it to the latest day of my life."

"Pardon me, Miss Merlin. The circumstance to which you allude was beyond my control, and Mr.—a—Word's share in it without my consent; his service was, I believe, well repaid by my father; and the trouble with me is not that my memory is defective, but rather that it is too retentive. I remember the origin of—"

"Our acquaintance with Mr. Worth!" interrupted Claudia, turning deadly pale and speaking in the low tones of suppressed passion. "Yes, I know! there was a stopped carriage, rifled hampers, and detected thieves. There was a young gentleman who dishonored his rank, and a noble working boy who distinguished himself in that affair. I remember perfectly well the circumstances to which you refer."

"You mistake, Miss Merlin," retorted Burghe, with a hot flush upon his brow, "I do not refer to that boyish frolic, for it was no more! I refer to—"

"Mr. Burghe, excuse me. Mr. Worth, will you do me the

favor to tell the band to strike up a quadrille? Lord Vincent, I presume they expect us to open the ball. Bee, my dear, you are engaged to Mr. Worth for this set. Be sure when he returns to come to the same set with us and be our *vis-à-vis*," said Claudia, speaking rapidly.

Before she had finished Ishmael had gone upon her errand, and the band struck up a lively quadrille. Claudia gave her hand to Lord Vincent, who led her to the head of the first set. When Ishmael returned, Bee gave him her hand and told him Claudia's wish, which, of course, had all the force of a command for him, and he immediately led Bee to the place opposite Lord Vincent and Miss Merlin.

And Captain Burghe was left to bite his nails in foiled malignity.

But later in the evening he took his revenge and received his punishment.

It happened in this manner: New quadrilles were being formed. Claudia was again dancing with Lord Vincent, and they had taken their places at the head of one of the sets. Ishmael was dancing with one of the poor neglected "wall-flowers" to whom Bee had kindly introduced him, and he led his partner to a vacant place at the foot of one of the sets; he was so much engaged in trying to entertain the shy and awkward girl, that he did not observe who was their *vis-à-vis*, or overhear the remarks that were made.

But Claudia, who, with the viscount, was standing very near, heard and saw all. She saw Ishmael lead his shy young partner up to the place in the set, exactly opposite to where Alfred Burghe with his partner, Miss Tourneysee, stood. And she heard Mr. Brughe whisper to Miss Tourneysee:

"Excuse me; and permit me to lead you to a seat. The person who has just taken the place opposite to us is not a proper associate even for me, still less for you."

And she saw Miss Tourneysee's look of surprise and heard her low-toned exclamation:

"Why, it is Mr. Worth! I have danced with him often!"

"I am sorry to hear it. I hope you will take the word of an officer and a gentleman that he is *not* a respectable person, and by no means a proper acquaintance for any lady."

"But why not?"

"Pardon me. I cannot tell you why not. It is not a story fit for your ears. But I will tell your father. For I think the real position of the fellow ought to be known. In the meantime, will you take my word for the truth of what I have said, and permit me to lead you to a seat?"

"Certainly," said the young lady, trembling with distress.

"I regret exceedingly to deprive you of your dance; but you perceive that there is no other vacant place."

"Oh, don't mention it! Find me a seat."

This low-toned conversation, every word of which had been overheard by Claudia, who, though in another set, stood nearly back to back with the speaker, was entirely lost to Ishmael, who stood at the foot of the same set with him, but was at a greater distance, and was besides quite absorbed in the task of reassuring his timid schoolgirl companion.

Just as Burghe turned to lead his partner away, and Ishmael, attracted by the movement, lifted his eyes to see the cause, Claudia gently drew Lord Vincent after her, and going up to the retiring couple said:

"Miss Tourneysee, I beg your pardon; but will you and your partner do myself and Lord Vincent the favor to exchange places with us? We particularly desire to form a part of this set."

"Oh, certainly!" said the young lady, wondering, but rejoiced to find that she should not be obliged to miss the dance.

They exchanged places accordingly; but as they still stood very near together, Claudia heard him whisper to his partner:

"This evening I think I will speak to your father and some other gentlemen and enlighten them as to who this fellow really is!"

Claudia heard all this; but commanded herself. Her face was pale as marble; her lips were bloodless; but her dark eyes had the terrible gleam of suppressed but determined hatred! In such moods as hers, people have sometimes planned murder.

However, she went through all the four dances very composedly. And when they were over and Lord Vincent had led her to a seat, she sent him to fetch her a glass of water, while she kept her eye on the movements of Captain Burghe, until she saw him deposit his partner on a sofa and leave her to fetch a cream, or some such refreshment.

And then Claudia arose, drank the ice water brought her by the viscount, set the empty glass on a stand and requested Lord Vincent to give her his arm down the room, as she wished to speak to Captain Burghe.

The viscount glanced at her in surprise, saw that her face was bloodless; but ascribed her pallor to fatigue.

Leaning on Lord Vincent's arm, she went down the whole length of the room until she paused before the sofa on which sat Miss Tourneysee and several other ladies, attended by General Tourneysee, Captain Burghe and other gentlemen.

Burghe stood in front of the sofa, facing the ladies and with his back toward Claudia, of whose approach he was entirely ignorant, as he discoursed as follows:

"Quite unfit to be received in respectable society, I assure you, General! Came of a wretchedly degraded set, the lowest of the low, upon my honor. This fellow——"

Claudia touched his shoulder with the end of her fan.

Alfred Burge turned sharply around and confronted Miss Merlin, and on meeting her eyes grew as pale as she was herself.

"Captain Burge," she said, modulating her voice to low and courteous tones, "you have had the misfortune to malign one of our most esteemed friends, at present a member of our household. I regret this accident exceedingly, as it puts me under the painful necessity of requesting you to leave the house with as little delay as possible!"

"Miss Merlin!—ma'am!" began the captain, crimsoning with shame and rage.

"You have heard my request, sir! I have no more to say but to wish you a very good evening," said Claudia, as with a low and sweeping courtesy she turned away.

Passing near the hall where the footmen waited, she spoke to one of them, saying:

"Powers, attend that gentleman to the front door."

All this was done so quietly that Alfred Burge was able to slink from the room, unobserved by anyone except the little group around the sofa, whom he had been entertaining with his calumnies. To them he had muttered that he would have satisfaction! That he would call Miss Merlin's father to a severe account for the impertinence of his daughter, *et cetera*.

But the consternation produced by these threats was soon dissipated. The band struck up an alluring waltz, and Lord Vincent claimed the hand of Beatrice, and Ishmael, smiling, radiant and unsuspecting, came in search of Miss Tourneysee, who accepted his hand for the dance without an instant's hesitation.

"Do you know"—inquired Miss Tourneysee, with a little curiosity to ascertain whether there was any mutual enmity between Burge and Ishmael—"Do you know who that Captain Burge is that danced the last quadrille with me?"

"Yes; he is the son of the late Commodore Burge, who was a gallant officer, a veteran of 1812, and did good service during the last War of Independence," said Ishmael, generously, uttering not one word against his implacable foe.

Miss Tourneysee looked at him wistfully and inquired:

"Is the son as good a man as the father?"

"I have not known Captain Burge since we were at school together."

"I do not like him. I do not think he is a gentleman," said Miss Tourneysee.

Ishmael did not reply. It was not his way to speak even deserved evil of the absent.

But Miss Tourneysee drew a mental comparison between the

meanness of Alfred's conduct and the nobility of Ishmael's. And the dance succeeded the conversation.

Claudia remained sitting on the sofa beside Mrs. Middleton, until at the close of the dance, when she was rejoined by the viscount, who did not leave her again during the evening.

The early summer nights were short, and so it was near the dawn when the company separated.

The party as a whole had been the most splendid success of the season.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE family slept late next day, and the breakfast was put back to the luncheon hour, when at length they all, with one exception, assembled around the table.

"Where is Mr. Worth?" inquired the judge.

"He took a cup of coffee and went to the courthouse at the usual hour, sir," returned Powers, who was setting the coffee on the table.

"Humph! that hotly contested case of Cobham *versus* Hanley still in progress, I suppose," said the judge.

At this moment Sam entered the breakfast room and laid a card on the table before his master.

"Eh? 'Lieutenant Springald, U. S. A.?' who the mischief is he?" said the judge, reading the name on the card.

"The gentleman, sir, says he has called to see you on particular business," replied Sam.

"This is a pretty time to come on business! Show him up into my office, Sam."

The servant withdrew to obey.

The judge addressed himself to his breakfast and the conversation turned upon the party of the preceding evening.

"I wonder what became of Burghe? He disappeared very early in the evening," said Judge Merlin.

"I turned him out of doors," answered Claudia, coolly.

The judge set down his coffee cup and stared at his daughter.

"He deserved it, papa! And nothing on earth but my sex prevented me from giving him a thrashing as well as a discharge," said Claudia.

"What has he done?" inquired her father.

Claudia told him the whole.

"Well, my dear, you did right, though I am sorry that there should have been any necessity for dismissing him. Degenerate son of a noble father, will nothing reform him!" was the comment of the judge.

Mr. Brudenell, who was present and had heard Claudia's account, was reflecting bitterly upon the consequences of his

own youthful fault of haste, visited so heavily in unjust reproach upon the head of his faultless son.

"Well!" said the judge, rising from the table, "now I will go and see what the deuce is wanted of me by Lieutenant Spring—Spring—Spring chicken! or whatever his name is!"

He went upstairs and found seated in his office a beardless youth in uniform, who arose and saluted him, saying, as he handed a folded note:

"I have the honor to be the bearer of a challenge, sir, from my friend and superior officer, Captain Burghe."

"A—what?" demanded the judge, with a frown as black as a thundercloud and a voice sharp as its clap, which made the little officer jump from his feet.

"A challenge, sir!" repeated the latter, as soon as he had composed himself.

"Why what the deuce do you mean by bringing a challenge to *me*? breaking the law under the very nose of an officer of the law?" said the judge, snatching the note and tearing it open. When he had read it he looked sternly at the messenger and said:

"Why, don't you know it is my solemn duty to have you arrested and sent to prison, for bringing me this, eh?"

"Sir"—began the little fellow, drawing his figure up, "men of honor never resort to such subterfuges, to evade the consequences of their own acts."

"Hold your tongue, child! You know nothing about what you are talking of. Men of honor are not duelists, but peaceable and law-abiding citizens. Don't be frightened, my brave little bantam! I won't have you arrested this time; but I will answer your heroic principal instead. Let us see again —what is it he says?"

And the judge sat down at his writing table and once more read over the challenge.

It ran thus:

JUDGE MERLIN:

Sir.—I have been treated with the grossest contumely by your daughter, Miss Claudia Merlin. I demand an ample apology from the young lady, or in default of that, the satisfaction of a gentleman from yourself. In the event of the first alternative offered being chosen, my friend, Lieutenant Springald, the bearer of this, is authorized to accept in my behalf all proper apologies that may be tendered. Or in the event of the second alternative offered being chosen, I must request that you will refer my friend to any friend of yours, that they may arrange together the terms of our hostile meeting.

MANSION HOUSE, *Friday*.

I have the honor to be, etc.,

ALFRED BURGHE.

Judge Merlin smiled grimly as he laid this precious communication aside and took up his pen to reply to it.

His answer ran as follows:

CAPTAIN ALFRED BURGHE:

WASHINGTON HOUSE, *Friday.*

My daughter, Miss Merlin, did perfectly right, and I fully indorse her act. Therefore, the first alternative offered—of making you the apology you demand—is totally inadmissible; but I accept the second one of giving you the satisfaction you require. The friend to whom I refer *your* friend is Deputy Marshal Browning, who will be prepared to take you both in custody. And the weapons with which I shall meet you will be the challenge that you have sent me and a warrant for your arrest. Hoping that this course may give you perfect satisfaction,

I have the honor to be, etc.,

RANDOLPH MERLIN.

Judge Merlin carefully folded and directed this note and put it into the hands of the little lieutenant, saying, pleasantly:

"There, my child! There you are! Take that to your principal."

The little fellow hesitated.

"I hope, sir, that this contains a perfectly satisfactory apology?" he said, turning it around in his fingers.

"Oh, perfectly! amply! We shall hear no more of the challenge."

"I am very glad, sir," said the little lieutenant, rising.

"Won't you have something before you go?"

The lieutenant hesitated.

"Shall I ring for the maid to bring you a slice of bread and butter and a cup of milk?"

"No, thank you, sir!" said Springald, with a look of offended dignity.

"Very well, then; you must give my respects to your papa and mamma, and ask them to let you come and play with little Bobby and Tommy Middleton! They are nice little boys!" said the judge, so very kindly that the little lieutenant, though hugely affronted, scarcely knew in what manner to resent the affront.

"Good day, sir!" he said, with a vast assumption of dignity, as he started toward the door.

"Good day, my little friend. You seem an innocent little fellow enough. Therefore I hope that you will never again be led into the sinful folly of carrying a challenge to fight a duel, especially to a gray-headed chief justice."

And so saying, Judge Merlin bowed his visitor out.

And it is scarcely necessary to say that Judge Merlin heard no more of "the satisfaction of a gentleman."

The story, however, got out, and Captain Burge and his second were so mercilessly laughed at, that they voluntarily shortened their own furlough and speedily left Washington.

The remainder of that week the house was again closed to company, during the process of dismantling the reception rooms of their festive decorations and restoring them to their ordinarily sober aspect.

By Saturday afternoon this transformation was affected and the household felt themselves at home again.

Early that evening Ishmael joined the family circle perfectly radiant with good news.

“What is it, Ishmael?” inquired the judge.

“Well, sir, the hard-fought battle is over at length, and we have the victory! The case of Cobham *versus* Hanley is decided! The jury came into court this afternoon with a verdict for the plaintiff.”

“Good!” said the judge.

“And the widow and children get their money! I am so glad!” said Bee, who had kept herself posted up in the progress of the great suit by reading the reports in the daily papers.

“Yes, but how much money will you get, Ishmael?” inquired the judge.

“None, sir, on this case. A condition fee that I was to make out of my case was offered me by the plaintiff in the first instance, but of course I could not speculate in justice.”

“Humph! well, it is of no use to argue with you, Ishmael. Now, there are two great cases which you have gained, and which ought to have brought you at least a thousand dollars, and which have brought you nothing!”

“Not exactly nothing, uncle; they have brought him fame,” said Bee.

“Fame is all very well, but money is better,” said the judge.

“The money will come also in good time, uncle; never you fear. Ishmael has placed his capital out at good interest, and with the best security.”

“What do you mean, Bee?”

“‘Whoso giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord.’ Ishmael’s services, given to the poor, are lent to the Lord,” said Bee, reverently.

“Humph! humph! humph!” muttered the judge, who never ventured to carry on an argument when the Scripture was quoted against him. “Well! I suppose it is all right. And now I hear that you are counsel for that poor devil Toomey, who fell through the grating of Sarsfield’s cellar, and crippled himself for life.”

“Yes,” said Ishmael. “I think he is entitled to heavy dam-

ages. It was criminal carelessness in Sarsfield and Company to leave their cellar grating in that unsafe condition for weeks, to the great peril of the passers-by. It was a regular trap for lives and limbs. And this poor laborer, passing over it, has fallen and lamed himself for life? And he has a large family depending upon him for support. I have laid the damages at five thousand dollars."

"Yes; but how much do *you* get?"

"Nothing. As in the other two cases, my client is not able to pay me a retaining fee, and it is against my principles to accept a contingent one."

"Humph! that makes *three* 'free, gratis, for nothing' labors! I wonder how long it will be before the money cases begin to come on?" inquired the judge, a little sarcastically.

"Oh, not very long," smiled Ishmael. "I have already received several retaining fees from clients who are able to pay, but whose cases may not come on until the next term."

"But when does poor Toomey's case come on?"

"Monday."

At that moment the door opened and Powers announced:

"Lord Vincent!"

The viscount entered the drawing-room; and Ishmael's pleasure was over for that evening.

On Monday Ishmael's third case, *Toomey versus Sarsfield*, came on. It lasted several days, and then was decided in favor of the plaintiff—Toomey receiving every dollar of the damages claimed for him by his attorney. In his gratitude the poor man would have pressed a large sum of money, even to one-fifth of his gains, upon his young counsel; but Ishmael, true to his principle of never gambling in justice, refused to take a dollar.

That week the court adjourned; and the young barrister had leisure to study and get up his cases for the next term. The extra session of Congress was also over. The Washington season was in fact at an end. And everybody was preparing to leave town.

Judge Merlin issued a proclamation that his servants should pack up all his effects, preparatory to a migration to Tanglewood; chains should not bind him to Washington any longer, nor wild horses draw him to Saratoga or any other place of public resort; because his very soul was sick of crowds and longed for the wilderness.

But the son of Powhatan was destined to find that circumstances are often stronger than those forces that he defied.

And so his departure from Washington was delayed for weeks by this event.

One morning the Viscount Vincent called as usual, and, after a prolonged private interview with Miss Merlin, he sent

a message to Judge Merlin requesting to see him alone for a few minutes.

Ishmael was seated with Judge Merlin in the study at the moment Powers brought this message.

"Ah! 'Lord Vincent requests the honor of a private interview' with me, does he? Well! it is what I have been expecting for some days! Wonder if he doesn't think he is *conferring* an honor instead of *receiving* one? Ask him to be so good as to walk up, Powers. Ishmael, my dear boy, excuse me for dismissing you for a few minutes; but pray return to me as soon as this Lord—'Foppington'—leaves me. May Satan fly away with him, for I know he is coming to ask me for my girl!"

It was well that Ishmael happened to be sitting with his back to the window. It was well also that Judge Merlin did not look up as his young partner passed out, else would the judge have seen the haggard countenance which would have told him more eloquently than words could of the force of the blow that had fallen on Ishmael's heart.

He went up into his own little room, and sat down at his desk, and leaning his brow upon his hand struggled with the anguish that wrung his heart.

It had fallen, then! It had fallen—the crushing blow! Claudia was betrothed to the viscount! He might have been, as everyone else was, prepared for this! But he was not! For he knew that Claudia was perfectly conscious of his own passionate love for her, and he knew that she loved him with almost equal fervor. It is true his heart had often been wrung with jealousy when seeing her with Lord Vincent; yet even then he had thought that her vanity only was interested in receiving the attentions of the viscount; and he had trusted in her honor that he believed would never permit her, while loving *himself*, to marry another, or even give that other serious encouragement. It is true also that he had never breathed his love to Claudia, for he knew that to do so would be an unpardonable abuse of his position in Judge Merlin's family, a flagrant breach of confidence and a fatal piece of presumption that would insure his final banishment from Claudia's society. So he had struggled to control his passion, seeing also that Claudia strove to conquer hers. And though no words passed between them, each knew by secret sympathy the state of the other's mind.

But lately, since his brilliant success at the bar and the glorious prospect that opened before him, he had begun to hope that Claudia, conscious of their mutual love, would wait for him only a few short years, at the end of which he would be able to offer her a position not unworthy even of Judge Merlin's daughter.

Such had been his splendid "castle in the air." But now the thunderbolt had fallen and his castle was in ruins.

Claudia, whom he had believed to be, if not perfectly faultless, yet the purest, noblest and proudest among women; Claudia, his queen, had been capable of selling herself to be the wife of an unloved man for the price of a title and a coronet—a breath and a bauble!

Claudia had struck a fatal blow, not only to his love for her, but to his honor of her; and both love and honor were in their death throes!

Anguish is no computer of time. He might have sat there half an hour or half a day, he could not have told which, when he heard the voice of his kind friend calling him.

"Ishmael! Ishmael, my lad! where are you, boy? Come to me!"

"Yes, yes, sir, I am coming," he answered, mechanically.

And like one who has fainted from torture, and recovered in bewilderment, he arose and walked down to the study.

Some blind instinct led him straight to a chair that was sitting with its back to the window; into this he sank, with his face in the deep shadow.

Judge Merlin was walking up and down the floor, with signs of disturbance in his looks and manners.

A waiter with decanters of brandy and wine, and some glasses, stood upon the table. This was a very unusual thing.

"Well, Ishmael! it is done! my girl is to be a viscountess; but I do not like it; no, I do not like it!"

Ishmael was incapable of reply; but the judge continued:

"It is not only that I shall lose her; utterly lose her, for her home will be in another hemisphere, and the ocean will roll between me and my sole child—it is not altogether that—but, Ishmael, I don't like the fellow; and I never did and never can!"

Here the judge paused, poured out a glass of wine, drank it, and resumed:

"And I do not know *why* I don't like him! that is the worst of it! His rank is, of course, unexceptionable, and indeed much higher than a plain republican like myself has a right to expect in a son-in-law! And his character appears to be unquestionable! He is a good-looking, well-behaved, intelligent and well-educated young fellow enough, and so I do not know why it is that I don't like him! But I *don't* like him, and that is all about it!"

The judge sighed, ran his hands through his gray hair, and continued:

"If I had any reason for this dislike; if I could find any just cause of offense in him; if I could put my hand down on any fault of his character:—I could then say to my daughter

—‘I object to this man for your husband upon this account,’—and then I know that she would not marry him in direct opposition to my wishes! But you see, I cannot do anything like this, and my objection to the marriage, if I should express it, would appear to be caprice, prejudice, injustice—”

He sighed again, walked several times up and down the floor in silence, and then once more resumed his monologue:

“People will soon be congratulating me on my daughter’s very splendid marriage! Congratulating me! Good Heaven, what a mockery! Congratulating me on the loss of my only child, to a foreigner, whom I half dislike and more than half suspect—though without being able to justify either feeling! What do you think, Ishmael? Is *that* a subject for congratulation?—But, good Heaven, boy!—what is the matter with you? Are you ill?” he suddenly exclaimed, pausing before the young man and noticing for the first time the awful pallor of his face and the deadly collapse of his form!

“Are you ill, my dear boy? speak!”

“Yes, yes, I am ill!” groaned Ishmael.

“Where? where?”

“Everywhere!”

The judge rushed to the table and poured out a glass of brandy and brought it to him.

But the young man, who was habitually and totally abstinent, shook his head.

“Drink it! drink it!” said the judge, offering the glass.

But Ishmael silently waved it off.

“As a medicine, you foolish fellow! As a medicine! You are sinking, don’t you know!” persisted the judge, forcing the glass into Ishmael’s hand.

Ishmael then placed it to his lips and swallowed its contents.

The effect of this draught upon him, unaccustomed as he was to alcoholic stimulants, was instantaneous. The brandy diffused itself through his chilled, sinking and dying frame, warming, elevating and restoring its powers.

“This is the fabled ‘elixir of life.’ I did not believe there was such a restorative in the world!” said Ishmael, sitting up and breathing freely under the transient exhilaration.

“To be sure it is, my boy!” said the judge, heartily, as he took the empty glass from Ishmael’s hand and replaced it on the waiter. “But what have you been doing to reduce yourself to this state?—sitting up all night over some perplexing case, as likely as not.”

“No.”

“But I am sure you overwork yourself. You should not do it, Ishmael! It is absurd to kill yourself for a living, you know.”

“I think, Judge Merlin, that, as you are so soon about to

leave Washington, and as there is so little to do in your office, I should be grateful if you would at once release me from our engagement and permit me to leave your employment," said Ishmael, who felt that it would be to him the most dreadful trial to remain in the house and meet Claudia and Vincent as betrothed lovers every day, and at last witness their marriage.

The judge looked annoyed and then asked:

"Now, Ishmael, why do you wish to leave me before the expiration of the term for which you were engaged?"

And before Ishmael could answer that question, he continued:

"You are in error as to the reasons you assign. In the first place, I am not to leave Washington so soon as I expected; as it is arranged that we shall remain here for the solemnization of the marriage, which will not take place until the first of July. And in the second place, instead of there being but little to do in the office, there will be a great deal to do—all Claudia's estate to be arranged, the viscount's affairs to be examined, marriage settlements to be executed—(I wish it was the bridegroom that was to be executed instead), letters to be written, and what not! So that you see I shall need your services very much. And besides, Ishmael, my boy, I do not wish to part with you just now, in this great trial of my life; for it *is* a great trial to me, Ishmael, to part with my only child, to a foreigner whom I dislike and who will take her across the sea to another world. I have loved you as a son, Ishmael! And now I ask you to stand by me in this crisis—for I do not know how I shall bear it! It will be to me like giving her up to death!"

Ishmael arose and placed his hand in that of his old friend. His stately young form was shaken by agitation, as an oak tree is by a storm, as he said:

"I will remain with you, Judge Merlin! I will remain with you through this trial! But oh! you do not know! you cannot know how terrible the ordeal will be to me!"

A sudden light of revelation burst upon Judge Merlin's mind! He looked into that agonized young face, clasped that true hand and said:

"Is it so, my boy? Oh, my poor boy, is it indeed so?"

"Make some excuse for me to the family below; say that I am not well, for that indeed is true; I cannot come into the drawing-room this evening!" said Ishmael.

And he hastily wrung his friend's hand and hurried from the room, for after that one touch of sympathy from Claudia's father, he felt that if he had stayed another moment he should have shamed his manhood and wept!

He hurried up into his little room to strive, in solitude and prayer, with his great sorrow.

Meanwhile the judge took up his hat for a walk in the open air. He had not seen his daughter since he had given his consent to her betrothal. And he felt that as yet he would not see her. He wished to subdue his own feelings of pain and regret before meeting her with the congratulations which he wished to offer.

"After all," he said to himself, as he descended the stairs, "after all, I suppose, I should dislike any man in the world who should come to marry Claudia, so 't is not the viscount who is in fault; but I who am unreasonable! But Ishmael! Ah, poor boy! poor boy! Heaven forgive Claudia, if she has had anything to do with this! And may Heaven comfort him, for he deserves to be happy!"

CHAPTER LXIII.

JUDGE MERLIN walked about, reasoning with himself all day; but he could not walk off his depression of spirits, or reason away his misgivings.

He returned home in time to dress for dinner. He crept up to his chamber with a wearied and stealthy air, for he was still dispirited and desirous of avoiding a meeting with his daughter.

He made his toilet and then sat down, resolved not to leave his chamber until the dinner bell rang, so that he should run no risk of seeing her until he met her at dinner, where of course no allusion would be made to the event of the morning.

He took up the evening paper, that lay upon the dressing table by some chance, and tried to read. But the words conveyed no meaning to his mind.

"She is all I have in this world!" he sighed as he laid the paper down.

"Papa!"

He looked up.

There she stood within his chamber door! It was an unprecedented intrusion! There she stood in her rich evening dress of purple moire antique, with the bandeau of diamonds encircling her night-black hair. Two crimson spots like the flush of hectic fever burned in her cheeks, and her eyes were unnaturally bright and wild, almost like those of insanity.

"Papa, may I come to you? Oh, papa, I have been waiting to speak to you all day; and it seems to me as if you had purposely kept out of my way. Are you displeased, papa? May I come to you now?"

He opened his arms and she came and threw herself upon his bosom, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"What is the matter, my darling?"

"Are you displeased, papa?"

"No, no, my darling! Why should I be? How could I be so unreasonable? But—do you love him, Claudia?"

"He will be an earl, papa."

"Are you happy, Claudia?"

"I shall be a countess, papa!"

"But—are you happy, my dear, I ask you."

"Happy? Who *is*? Who ever *was*?"

"Your mother and myself were happy, very happy during the ten blessed years of our union! But then we loved each other, Claudia! Do *you* love this man whom you are about to make your husband?"

"Papa! I have consented to be *his* wife! Should not that satisfy you?"

"Certainly, certainly, my child! Besides it is not for my rough, masculine hand to probe your heart! Your mother might do it, if she were living, but not myself!"

"Papa! bless me! it was for that I came to you! Oh, give me your blessing before I go downstairs to—him, whom I must henceforth meet as my promised husband."

"May the Lord bless and save you, my poor, motherless girl!" he said, laying his hand on her bowed head.

And she arose and without another word went below stairs.

When she entered the drawing-room, she found the viscount there alone. He hastened to meet her with gallant alacrity and pressed his lips to hers, but at their touch the color fled from her face and did not return. With attentive courtesy Lord Vincent handed her to a seat and remained standing near, seeking to interest and amuse her with his conversation. But just as the *tête-à-tête* was growing unsupportable to Claudia, the door opened and Beatrice entered. Too many times had Bee come in upon just such a *tête-à-tête* to suspect that there was anything more in this one than there had been in any other for the last six months. So, unconscious of the recent betrothal of this pair, she, smiling, accepted the chair the viscount placed for her, and readily followed Claudia's lead, by allowing herself to be drawn into the conversation. Several times she looked up at Claudia's face, noticing its marble whiteness; but at length concluded that it must be only the effect of late hours, and so dropped the subject from her mind.

Presently the other members of the family dropped in and the dinner was served.

One vacant chair at the table attracted general attention. But, ah! to one there that seat was not vacant; it was filled with the specter of her murdered truth.

"Where is Mr. Worth?" inquired Mrs. Middleton, from the head of the table.

"Oh! worked himself into a nervous headache over Allenby's complicated brief! I told him how it would be if he applied himself so uninterruptedly to business; but he would take no warning! Well, these young enthusiasts must learn by painful experience to modify their zeal," said the judge, in explanation.

Everyone expressed regret except Claudia, who understood and felt how much worse than any headache was the heart sickness that had for the time mastered even Ishmael's great strength; but she durst utter no word of sympathy. And the dinner proceeded to its conclusion. And directly after the coffee was served the viscount departed.

Meanwhile Ishmael lay extended upon his bed, clasping his temples and waging a silent war with his emotions.

A rap disturbed him.

"Come in."

Powers entered with a tea tray in his hands, upon which was neatly arranged a little silver tea service, with a transparent white cup, saucer and plate. The wax candle in its little silver candlestick that sat upon the tray was the only light, and scarcely served to show the room.

Ishmael raised himself up just as Powers sat the tray upon the stand beside the bed.

"Who has had leisure to think of me this evening?" thought Ishmael, as he contemplated this unexpected attention. Then, speaking aloud, he inquired:

"Who sent me these, Powers?"

"Miss Middleton, sir; and she bade me say to you that you must try to eat; and that it is a great mistake to fast when one has a nervous headache, brought on by fatigue and excitement; and that the next best thing to rest is food, and both together are a cure," replied the man, carefully arranging the service on the stand.

"I might have known it," thought Ishmael, with an undefined feeling of self-reproach. "I might have known that she would not forget me, even though I forgot myself! What would my life be at home without this dear little sister? Sweet sister! dear sister! Yes, I will follow her advice; I will eat and drink for her sake, because I know she will question Powers and be disappointed if she finds that I have not done justice to this repast."

"Will you have more light, sir?" asked the footman.

"No, no, thank you," replied Ishmael, rising and seating himself in a chair beside the stand.

The tea was strong and fragrant, the cream rich, the sugar crystalline, and a single cup of the beverage refreshed him. The toast was crisp and yellow, the butter fresh, and the shavings of chipped beef crimson and tender. And so, despite

his heartache and headache, Ishmael found his healthy youthful appetite stimulated by all this. And the meal that was begun for Bee's sake was finished for his own.

"Your head is better now, I hope, sir?" respectfully inquired Powers, as he prepared to remove the service.

"Much, thank you. Tell Miss Middleton so, with my respects, and say how grateful I feel to her for this kind attention."

"Yes, sir."

"And, Powers, you may bring me lights now."

"Yes, sir."

And a few minutes later, when Powers had returned with two lighted candles and placed them on the table, Ishmael, who knew that not an overtired brain but an undisciplined heart was the secret of his malady, set himself to work as to a severe discipline, and worked away for three or four hours with great advantage; for, when at twelve o'clock, he retired to bed, he fell asleep and slept soundly until morning.

That is what work did for Ishmael. And work will do as much for anyone who will try it.

It is true in the morning he awoke to a new sense of woe; but the day had also its work to discipline him. He breakfasted with Bee and her father and the judge, who were the only members of the family present at the table; and then he went to the City Hall, where he had an appointment with the District Attorney.

That morning the engagement between Lord Vincent and Claudia was formally announced to the family circle. And Bee understood the secret of Ishmael's sudden illness. The marriage was appointed to take place on the first of the ensuing month, and so preparations for the event were at once commenced.

Mrs. Middleton and Claudia went to New York to order the wedding outfit. They were gone a week, and when they returned, Claudia, though much thinner in flesh, seemed to have recovered the bloom that had been frightened away by the viscount's first kiss.

The great responsibility of the home preparations fell upon Bee. The house had to be prepared for visitors; not only for the wedding guests; but also for friends and relatives of the family, who were coming from a distance and would remain for several days. For the last mentioned, new rooms had to be made ready. And all this was to be done under the immediate supervision of Beatrice.

As on two former occasions, Miss Merlin called in the aid of her three favorite ministers—Vourienne, Devizac and Dureezie.

On the morning of the last of June Vourienne and his as-

sistants decorated the dining room. On the evening of the same day Devizac and his waiters laid the table for the wedding breakfast. And then the room was closed up until the next day. While the family took their meals in their small breakfast room.

During the evening, relatives from a distance arrived and were received by Bee, who conducted them to their rooms.

By this inroad of visitors Bee herself, with the little sister who shared her bed, were driven up into the attic to the plain spare room next to Ishmael's own. Here, early in the evening, as he sat at his work, he could hear Bee, who would not neglect little Lu for anything else in the world, rocking and singing her to sleep. And Ishmael, too, who had just laid down his pen because the waning light no longer enabled him to write, felt his great trouble soothed by Bee's song.

CHAPTER LXIV.

SITTING within the recess of the dormer window, soothed by the gathering darkness of the quiet, starlight night, and by the gentle cadences of Bee's low, melodious voice, as she sung her baby sister to sleep, Ishmael remained some little time longer, when suddenly Bee's song ceased, and he heard her exclamation of surprise:

"Claudia! you up here! and already dressed for dinner! How well you look! How rich that maize-colored brocade is! And how elegant that spray of diamonds in your hair! I never saw you wear it before! Is it a new purchase?"

"It is the viscount's present. I wear it this evening in his honor!"

"How handsome you are, Lady Vincent! You know I do not often flatter; but really, Claudia, all the artist in me delights to contemplate you! I never saw you with such brilliant eyes, or such a beautiful color!"

"Brilliant eyes! beautiful color! ha! ha! ha! the first frenzy, I think! The last—well, it ought to be beautiful! I paid ten dollars a scruple for it at a wicked French shop in Broadway! And I have used the scruple unscrupulously!" she cried with a bitter laugh, as of self-scorn.

"Oh, Claudia! rouged!" said Bee, in a tone of surprise and pain.

"Yes, rouged and powdered! why not? Why should the face be true when the life is false!—Oh, Bee,—" she suddenly broke forth in a wail of anguish; "lay that child down and listen to me! I must tell some one, or my heart will break!"

There was a movement, a low, muffling, hushing sound, that

told the unwilling listener that Bee was putting her baby sister in the bed. Ishmael arose with the intention of leaving his room, and slipping out of hearing of the conversation that was not intended for his ears; but utterly overcome by the crowding emotions of his heart, he sank back in his chair.

He heard Bee return to her place. He heard Claudia throw herself down on the floor by Bee's side, and say:

"Oh, let me lay my head down upon your lap, Bee!"

"Claudia! dear Claudia! what is the matter with you? What can I do for you?"

"Receive my confidence, that is all! Hear my confession! I must tell somebody, or die. I wish I was a Catholic and had a father confessor, who would hear me and comfort me, and absolve my sins and keep my secrets!"

"Can any man stand in that relation to a woman except her father, if she is single, or her husband, if she is married?" asked Bee.

"I don't know! and I don't care! Only when I passed by St. Patrick's Church, with this load of trouble on my soul, I felt as if it would have done me good to steal into one of those veiled recesses, and tell the good old father there!"

"You could have told your heavenly Father anywhere."

"He knows it already! but I durst not pray to Him! I am not so impious as that either! I have not presumed to pray for a month—not since my betrothal!"

"You have not presumed to pray! Oh, Claudia!"

"How should I dare to pray, after I had deliberately sold myself to the demon? after I had deliberately determined to sin and take the wages of sin!"

"Claudia! Oh, Heaven! You are certainly mad!"

"I know it! but the knowledge does not help me to the cure! I have been mad a month!" Then breaking forth into a wail of woe, she cried: "Oh, Bee! I do not love that man! I do not love him! and the idea of marrying him appals my very soul!"

"Good Heaven, Claudia, then why—" began Bee, but Claudia fiercely continued:

"I loathe him! I sicken at him! His first kiss! Oh, Bee! the cold, clammy touch of those lips struck all the color from my face forever, I think!—I loathe him!"

"Oh, Claudia! Claudia! why, in the name of all that is wise and good, do you do yourself, and him, too, such a terrible wrong as to marry him?" inquired the deeply shocked maiden.

"Because I must! Because I will! I have deliberately determined to be a peeress of England, and I will be one, whatever the cost."

"But oh! have you thought of the deadly sin—the treach-

ery, the perjury, the sacrilege, oh! and the dreadful degradation of such a loveless marriage?"

"Have I thought of these things—these horrors? Yes! witness this tortured heart and racked brain of mine!"

"Then why? oh! why, Claudia, do you persevere?"

"I am in the vortex of the whirlpool and cannot stop myself!"

"Then let *me* stop you! My weak hand is strong enough for that! Remain here, dear Claudia! Let me go downstairs and report that you are ill, as indeed and in truth you are! The marriage can be delayed, and then you can have an explanation with the viscount and break it off altogether!"

"And break my plighted faith! Is that your advice, young moralist?"

"There was no faith in your plighted word, Claudia! It was very wrong to promise to marry a man you could not love; but it would be criminal to keep such a promise! Speak candidly to his lordship, Claudia, and ask him to release you from your engagement! My word on it he will do it."

"Of course! and make me the town talk for the delight of all who envy me!"

"Better be that than an unloving wife!"

"No, Bee! I must fulfill my destiny! And besides I never thought of turning from it! I am in the power of the whirlpool or the demon!"

"It is the demon! the demon that is carrying you down into this whirlpool! And the name of the demon is Ambition, Claudia! and the name of the whirlpool is Ruin."

"Yes! it *is* ambition that possesses my soul! None other but the sin by which angels fell would have power to draw my soul down from Heaven!—*For Heaven was possible to me, once!*" And with these last words she melted into tears and wept as if the fountains of her heart were broken up and gushing through her eyes.

"Yes," she repeated in the pauses of her weeping, "Heaven was possible for me once! never more! oh! never, never more! Filled with the ambition of Lucifer I have cast myself out of that Heaven! But alas! alas! I have Lucifer's ambition without his strength to suffer!"

"Claudia! dear Claudia!"

"Do not speak to me! Let *me* speak! for I must speak or die! It is not only that I do not love this viscount; but oh, Bee!" she wailed in the prolonged tones of unutterable woe, "I love another! I love Ishmael!"

There was a sudden movement and a fall.

"You push me from you! Oh! cruel friend! Let me lay my head upon your lap again, Bee, and sob out all this anguish here! I must or my heart will burst! I love Ishmael!"

His love is the Heaven of Heavens from which Ambition has cast me down! I love Ishmael! Oh, how much, my reason, utterly overthrown, may some time betray to the world! This love fills my soul! Oh, more than that! it is greater than my soul! it goes beyond it, into infinitude! There is light, warmth and life where Ishmael is; darkness, coldness and death where he is not! To meet his eyes! those beautiful, dark, luminous eyes, that seem like inlets to some perfect inner world of wisdom, love and pure joy;—or to lay my hand in his, and feel that soft, strong, elastic hand close upon mine—gives me a moment of such measureless content, such perfect assurance of peace, that for the time I forget all the sin and horror that envelops and curses my life! But to be his beloved wife! Oh, Bee! I cannot imagine in the life of Heaven a diviner happiness than that!"

A low, half-suppressed cry from Bee. And Claudia continued:

"It is a love that all which is best in my nature approves! For oh! who is like Ishmael? Who so wise, so good, so useful? Morally, intellectually and physically beautiful! an Apollo! more than that, a Christian gentleman! He is human and yet he appears to me to be perfectly faultless!"

There was a pause and a low sound of weeping, broken at last by Claudia, who rustled up to her feet, saying:

"There! it is past!"

"Claudia," said Bee, solemnly, "you must not let this marriage go on! to do so would be to commit the deadliest sin!"

"I have determined to commit it then, Bee."

"Claudia! if I saw you on the brink of endless woe, would I not be right in trying to pluck you back? oh, Claudia, dear cousin, pause! reflect——"

"Bee, hush! I have reflected until my brain has nearly burst! I must fulfill my destiny! I must be a peeress of England, cost what it may in sin against others, or in suffering to myself!"

"Oh! what an awful resolution! and what an awful defiance! Ah! what have you invoked upon your head!"

"I know not! the curse of Heaven, perhaps!"

"Claudia!"

"Be silent, Bee!"

"I must not, cannot, will not be silent! My hand is weak, but it shall grasp your arm to hold you back; my voice is low, but it shall be raised in remonstrance with you! You may break from my hold; you may deafen yourself to my words; you may escape me so; but it will be to cast yourself into——"

"Lawyer Vivian's 'gulf of perdition!' Is that what you mean? Nonsense, Bee. My hysterics are over now; my hour

of weakness past; I am myself again! And I feel that I shall be Lady Vincent—the envy of Washington; the admiration of London; the only titled lady of the republican court, and the only beauty at St. James!" said Claudia, rustling a deep courtesy.

"Claudia——"

"And in time I shall be Countess of Hurstmonceux, and perhaps after a while Marchioness of Banff; for Vincent thinks if the Conservatives come in his father will be raised a step in the peerage!"

"And is it for *that* you sell yourself? Oh, Claudia, how Satan fools you! Be rational; consider: what is it to be a countess, or even a marchioness? It is 'distance lends enchantment to the view.' Here in this country, where, thank the Lord, there is no hereditary rank—no titles and no coronets—these things, from their remoteness, impress your imagination, and disturb your judgment. You will not feel so in England; there, where there are hundreds and thousands of titled personages, your coveted title will sink to its proper level, and you will find yourself of much less importance in London as Lady Vincent, than you are in Washington as Miss Merlin. There you will find how little you have really gained by the sacrifice of truth, honor and purity; all that is best in your woman's nature—all that is best in your earthly—yes, and your eternal life!"

"Bee, have you done?"

"No. You have given me *two* reasons why I think you ought not to marry the viscount: first, because you do *not* love him, and secondly, because you *do* love—some one else. And now I will give you two more reasons why you should not marry him—viz., first, because he is not a good man, and secondly, because he does not love you. There!" said Beatrice, firmly.

"Bee, how dare you say that! What should you know of his character? And why should you think he does not love me?"

"I *feel* that he is not a good man; so do *you*, I will venture to say, Claudia. And I *know* that he marries you for some selfish or mercenary motive; your money, possibly. And so also do *you* know it, Claudia, I dare to affirm."

"Have you anything more to say?"

"Only this: to beg, to pray, to urge you not to sin—not to debase yourself! Oh, Claudia! if loving Ishmael as you profess to do, and loathing the viscount as you confess you do, and knowing that he cares nothing for you, you still marry him for his title and his rank, as you admit you will—Claudia! Claudia! in the pure sight of angels you will be more guilty, and less pardonable than the poor lost creatures of the pave-

ment, whose shadow you would scarcely allow to fall across your path!"

"Bee, you insult, you offend, you madden me! If this be so—if you speak the truth—I cannot help it, and I do not care. I am ambitious! If I immolate all my womanly feelings to become a peeress, it is as I would certainly and ruthlessly destroy everything that stood in my way to become a queen, if that were possible."

"Good Heavens, Claudia! are you then really a fiend in female form?" exclaimed the dismayed girl.

"I do not know. I may be so. I think Satan has taken possession of me since my betrothal! At least I feel that I could be capable of great crimes to secure great ends," said Claudia, recklessly.

"And, oh! Heaven! the opportunity will be surely afforded to you if you do not repent. Satan takes good care to give his servants the fullest freedom to develop their evil. Oh, Claudia, for the love of Heaven, stop where you are! go no further. Your very next step on this sinful road may make retreat impossible. Break off this marriage at once. Better the broken troth—better the nine days' wonder—than the perjured bride, and the loveless, sinful nuptials! You said you were ambitious. Claudia—" here Bee's voice grew almost inaudible from intense passion—"Claudia! you do not know—you cannot know what it costs me to say what I am about to say to you now; but—I will say it: You love Ishmael. Well, he loves you—ah! far better than you love him, or than you are capable of loving *anyone*. For *you* all his toils have been endured, all his laurels won. Claudia! be proud of this great love; it is a hero's love—a poet's love. Claudia! you have received much adulation in your life, and you will receive much more; but you never have received, and you never will, so high an honor as you have in Ishmael's love. It is a crown of glory to your life. You are ambitious! Well, wait for him; give him a few short years, and he will attain honors, not hereditary, but all his own. He will reach a position that the proudest woman may be proud to share; and his wife shall take a higher rank among American matrons than the wife of a mere nobleman can reach in England. And his untitled name, like that of Cæsar, shall be a title in itself."

"Bee! Bee! you wring my heart in two. You drive me mad! It cannot be, I tell you! It can never be! He may rise! there is no doubt but that he will! But let him rise ever so high, I cannot be his wife! *his wife*; horrible! I came of a race of which all the men were brave, and all the women pure! And he—"

"Is braver than the bravest man of your race! purer than the purest woman!" interrupted Bee, fervently.

"He is the child of shame and his heritage is dishonor! He bears his mother's maiden name, and she was—the scorn of his sex, and the reproach of ours! And this is the man you advise *me*, Claudia Merlin, whose hand is sought in marriage by the heir of one of the oldest earldoms in England, to marry! Bee, the insult is unpardonable! You might as well advise me to marry my father's footman! and better, for Powers came at least of honest parents!" said Claudia, speaking in the mad, reckless, defiant way in which those conscious of a bad argument passionately defend their point.

For a few moments Bee seemed speechless with indignation. Then she burst forth vehemently:

"It is false! as false as the father of falsehood himself! When thorns produce figs, or the deadly nightshade nectaries; when eaglets are hatched in owls' nests and young lions spring from rat holes, then I may believe these foul slanders of Ishmael and his parents. Shame on you, Claudia Merlin, for repeating them! You have shown me much evil in your heart to-night; but nothing so bad as that! Ishmael is nature's gentleman! His mother must have been pure and lovely and loving! his father good and wise and brave! else how could they have given this son to the world! And did you forget, Claudia, when you spoke those cruel words of him, did you forget that only a little while ago you admitted that you loved him, and that all which was best in your nature approved that love?"

"No! I did not and do not forget it! It was and it is true! But what of that? I may not be able to help adoring him for his personal excellence! But to be his wife—the wife of a—horrible!"

"Have you forgotten, Claudia, that only a few minutes ago you said that you could not conceive of a diviner happiness than to be the beloved wife of Ishmael?"

"No! I have not forgotten it! And I spoke the truth, but that joy which I could so keenly appreciate can never, never be mine! And that is the secret of my madness! for I am mad, Bee. And, oh! I came here to-night with my torn and bleeding heart! torn and bleeding from the dreadful battle between love and pride! came here with my suffering heart! my sinful heart if you will! and laid it on your bosom to be soothed! and you have taken it and flung it back in my face! You have broken the bruised reed! quenched the smoking flax! humbled the humble! smitten the fallen! Oh, Bee! you have been more cruel than you know! Good-by! Good-by!" And she turned and flung herself out of the room.

"Claudia, dear Claudia! oh, forgive me! I did not mean to wound you; if I spoke harshly it was because I felt for both! Claudia! come back, love!" cried Bee, hurrying after

her; but Claudia was gone. Bee would have followed her; but little Lu's voice was heard in plaintive notes. Bee returned to the room to find her little sister lying awake with wide-open, frightened eyes.

"Oh, Bee! don't do! and don't let she tome bat. She stares Lu!"

"Shall Bee take Lu up again and rock her to sleep?"

"'Es."

Bee gently lifted the little one and sat down in the rocking chair and began to rock slowly and sing softly. But presently she stopped and whispered:

"Baby!"

"'Es, Bee."

"Do you love Cousin Claudia?"

"'Es, but she wates me up and stares me; don't let she tome adain, Bee."

"No, I will not; but poor Claudia is not happy; won't you ask the Lord to bless poor Claudia? He hears little children like you!"

"'Es; tell me what to say, Bee." And without another word the little one slid down upon her knees and folded her hands, while Bee taught the sinless child to pray for the sinful woman.

And then she took the babe again upon her lap, and rocked slowly and sung softly until she soothed her to sleep.

Then Bee arose and rustled softly about the room, making her simple toilet before going to the saloon to join the guests.

CHAPTER LXV.

ISHMAEL sat in the shadows of his room overwhelmed with shame and sorrow and despair. He had heard every cruel word! they had entered his ears and pierced his heart! And not only for himself he bowed his head and sorrowed and despaired, but for her! for her! proud, selfish, sinful, but loving, and oh! how fatally beloved!

It was not only that he worshiped her with a blind idolatry, and knew that she returned his passion with equal strength and fervor, and that she would have waited for him long years, and married him at last but for the cloud upon his birth. It was not this—not his own misery that crushed him, nor even her present wretchedness that prostrated him—no! but it was the awful, shapeless shadow of some infinite unutterable woe in Claudia's future, and into which she was blindly rushing, that overwhelmed him. Oh! to have saved her from this woe, he would gladly have laid down his life!

The door opened and Jim, his especial waiter, entered with two lighted candles on a tray. He sat them on the table and was leaving the room, when Ishmael recalled him. What I am about to relate is a trifle perhaps, but it will serve to show the perfect beauty of that nature which, in the midst of its own great sorrow, could think of the small wants of another.

"Jim, you asked me this morning to write a letter for you, to your mother, I think."

"Yes, Master Ishmael, I thank you, sir; whenever you is at leisure, sir, with nothing to do; which I wouldn't presume to be in a hurry, sir, nor likewise onconvenience you the least in the world."

"It will not inconvenience me, Jim; it will give me pleasure, whenever you can spare me half an hour," replied Ishmael, speaking with as much courtesy to the poor dependent as he would have used in addressing his wealthiest patron.

"Well, Master Ishmael, which I ought to say Mr. Worth, and I beg your pardon, sir, only it is the old love as makes me forget myself, and call you what I used to in the old days, because Mr. Worth do seem to leave me so far away from you, sir—"

"Call me what you please, Jim, we are old friends and I love my old friends better than any new distinctions that could come between us, but which I will never allow to separate us. What were you about to say, Jim?"

"Well, Master Ishmael, and I thank you sincere, sir, for letting of me call you so, I was agoing for to say, as I could be at your orders any time, even now, if it would suit you, sir; because I have lighted up all my rooms and set my table for dinner, which it is put back an hour because of Master Walter, who is expected by the six o'clock train this evening; and Sam is waiting in the hall and I ain't got anything very partic'lar to do for the next hour or so."

"Very well, Jim, sit down in that chair and tell me what you want me to write," said Ishmael, seating himself before his desk and dipping his pen in ink.

Yes, it was a small matter in itself; but it was characteristic of the man, thus to put aside his own poignant anguish to interest himself in the welfare of the humblest creature who invoked his aid.

"Now then, Jim."

"Well, Master Ishmael," said the poor fellow. "You know what to say a heap better'n I do. Write it beautiful, please."

"Tell me what is in your heart, Jim, and then I will do the best I can," said Ishmael, who possessed the rare gift of drawing out from others the best that was in their thoughts.

"Well, sir, I thinks a heap o' my poor ole mother, I does; 'membering how she did for me when I was a boy and won-

dering if anybody does for her now, and if she is comfortable down there at Tanglewood. And I wants her to know it; and not to be a thinking as I forgets her."

Ishmael wrote rapidly for a few moments and then looked up.

"What else, Jim?"

"Well, sir, tell her as I have saved a heap of money for her out'n the presents the gemmen made me o' Christmas, and I'll bring it to her when I come down—which the ole 'oman do love money, sir, better than she do anything in this world, 'cept it is me and old marster and Miss Claudia. And likewise what she wants me to bring her from town, and whether she would like a red gownd or a yellow one."

Ishmael set down this and looked up.

"Well, Jim?"

"Well, sir, tell her how she ain't got no call to be anxious, nor likewise stressed in her mind, nor lay 'wake o' nights, thinking 'bout me, fear I should heave myself 'way, marrying of these yer trifling city gals as don't know a spinning wheel from a harrow! And how I ain't seen nobody yet as I like better'n my ole mother and the young lady of color as she knows 'bout and proves of; which, sir, it ain't nobody else but your own respected aunt, Miss Hannah's Miss Sally, as lives at Woodside."

"I have put all that down, Jim."

"Well, sir, and about the grand wedding as is to be to-morrow, sir; and how the Bishop of Maryland is going to 'form the ceremony; and how the happy pair be going to go on a grand tower and then going to visit Tanglewood afore they parts for the old country; and how she will see a rale, livin' lord as she'll be 'stonished to see look so like any other man; and last ways how Miss Claudia do talk about taking me and Miss Sally along of her to foreign parts, because she prefers to be waited on by colored ladies and gentlemen 'fore white ones; and likewise how I would wish to go and see the world, only I won't go, nor likewise would Miss Claudia wish to take me, if the ole 'oman wishes otherwise."

Ishmael wrote and then looked up. Poor Jim, absorbed in his own affairs, did not notice how pale the writer's face had grown, or suspect how often during the last few minutes he had stabbed him to the heart.

"Well, sir, that is about all, I think, Master Ishmael. Only, please, sir, put it all down in your beautiful language as makes the ladies cry when you gets up and speaks afore the great judges theirselves."

"I will do my best, Jim."

"Thank you, sir. And please sign *my* name to it, not yourn —*my* name—James Madison Monroe Mortimer."

"Yes, Jim."

"And please direct it to Mistress Catharine Maria Mortimer, most in general called by friends, Aunt Katie, as is house-keeper at Tanglewood."

Ishmael complied with his requests as far as discretion permitted.

"And now, sir, please read it all out aloud to me, so I can hear how it sound."

Ishmael complied with this request also, and read the letter aloud, to the immense delight of Jim, who earnestly expressed his approbation in the emphatic words:

"Now—that—is—beautiful! Thank y', sir! That is ekal to anything as ever I heard out'n the pulpit! and sides which, sir, it is all true! true as gospel, sir! it is just exactly what I thinks and how I feels and what I wants to say, only I ain't got the words. Won't mother be proud o' that letter nyther? Why, laws, sir, the ole 'oman'll get the minister to read that letter! And then she'll make everybody as comes to the house as *can* read, read it over and over again for the pride she takes in it, till she'll fairly know it all by heart,"—etc., etc., etc.

For Jim went on talking and smiling and covering the writer all over with gratitude and affection until he was interrupted by the stopping of a carriage, the ringing of a door bell and the sound of a sudden arrival.

"There's Master Walter Middleton now, as sure as the world! I must run! Dinner'll be put on the table, soon's ever he's changed his dress! I'm a thousand times obleeged to you, sir, I am, indeed, everlasting obleeged! I wish I could prove it some way! Mother'll be so pleased!" And talking all the way downstairs, Jim took himself and his delight away.

Ishmael sighed, and arose to dress for dinner. His kindness had not been without its reward. The little diversion of Jim's letter had done him good. Blessed little offices of loving kindness—what ministering angels are they to the donor as well as the receiver! With some degree of self-possession Ishmael completed his toilet, and turned to leave his room, when the sound of some one rushing up the stairs like a storm arrested his steps.

Then a voice sounded outside:

"Which is Ishmael's room? Bother! Oh, here it is!" and Bee's door was opened. "No! calico! Ah! now I'm right."

And the next instant Walter Middleton burst open the door and rushed in, exclaiming joyfully, as he seized and shook the hands of his friend:

"Ah! here you are, old fellow! God bless you! How glad I am to see you! You are still the first love of my heart, Ishmael! Damon, your Pythias has not even a sweetheart to

dispute your empire over him. How are you? I have heard of your success. Wasn't it glorious! You're a splendid fellow, Ishmael, and I'm proud of you. You may have Bee if you want her. I always thought there was a bashful kindness between you two. And there isn't a reason in the world why you shouldn't have her. And so her Royal Highness, the Princess Claudia, has caught a lord, has she? Well, you know she always said she would, and she has kept her word. But, I say, how are you? How do you wear your honors? How do the toga and the bays become you? Turn around and let us have a look at you." And so the affectionate fellow rattled on, shaking both Ishmael's hands every other second, until he had talked himself fairly out of breath.

"And how are *you*, dear Walter! But I need not ask; you look so well and happy," said Ishmael, as soon as he could get in a word.

"Me? Oh, I'm well enough. Naught's never in danger. I've just graduated, you know; with the highest honors, they say. My thesis won the great prize; that was because *you* were not in the same class, you know. I have my diploma in my pocket; I'm an M.D.; I can write myself doctor, and poison people, without danger of being tried for murder! isn't that a privilege? Now let my enemies take care of themselves! Why don't you congratulate me, you——"

"I do, with all my heart and soul, Walter!"

"That's right! only I had to drag it from you. Well, so I'm to be 'best man' to this noble bridegroom. Too much honor. I am not prepared for it. One cannot get ready for graduating and marrying at the same time. I don't think I have got a fit thing to wear. I wrote to Bee to buy me some fine shirts, and some studs, and gloves, and handkerchiefs, and hair oil, and things proper for the occasion. I wonder if she did it?"

"I don't know! I know that she has been overwhelmed with care for the last month, too much care, for a girl, so it is just possible that she has had no opportunity. Indeed she has a great deal to think of and to do."

"Oh, it won't hurt her; especially if it consists of preparations for the wedding."

A bell rang.

"There now, Ishmael! There is that diabolical dinner bell! You may look! but it is true! a dinner bell that peals out at seven o'clock in the evening, *is* a diabolical dinner bell. At college we dine at twelve meridian, sharp, and sup at six! It is dreadful to sit at table a whole hour, and be bored by seeing other people eat, and pretending to eat yourself, when you are not hungry! Well! there's no help for it! Come down and be bored, Ishmael."

They went down into the drawing-room, where quite a large circle of near family connections were assembled.

Walter Middleton was presented to the Viscount Vincent, who was the only stranger, to him, present.

Claudia was there looking as calm, as self-possessed and queenly as if she had not passed through a storm of passion two hours before.

Ishmael glanced at her and saw the change with amazement, but he dared not trust himself to look again.

The dinner party, with all this trouble under the surface, passed off in superficial gayety. The guests separated early, because the following morning would usher in the wedding day.

CHAPTER LXVI.

ISHMAEL awoke. After a restless night, followed by an hour's complete forgetfulness, that more nearly resembled the swoon of exhaustion than the sleep of health, Ishmael awoke to a new sense of wretchedness.

You who have suffered know what such awakenings are. You have seen some one dearer than life die; but hours, days, or weeks of expectation have gradually prepared you for the last scene; and though you have seen the dear one die, and though you have wept yourself half blind and half dead, you have slept the sleep of utter oblivion, which is like death; but you have at last awakened and returned to consciousness to meet the shock of memory and the sense of sorrow a thousand times more overwhelming than the first blow of bereavement had been.

Or you have been for weeks looking forward to the parting of one whose presence is the very light of your days. And in making preparations for that event the thought of coming separation has been somewhat dulled; but at last all is ready; the last night has come; you all separate and go to bed, with the mutual injunction to be up early in the morning for the sake of seeing "him"—it may be some brave volunteer going to the war—off; after laying awake nearly all night you suddenly drop into utter forgetfulness of impending grief, and into some sweet dream of pleasantness and peace. You awake with a start; the hour has come; the hour of parting; the hour of doom!

Yes, whatever the grief may be, it is in the hour of such awakenings we feel it most poignantly.

Thus was it with Ishmael. The instant he awoke the spear of memory transfixed his soul. He could have cried out in his agony. It took all his manhood to control his pain. He

arose and dressed himself and offered up his morning worship and went to the breakfast room, resolved to pass through the day's fiery ordeal, cost him what it might.

Claudia was not at breakfast. In fact, she seldom or never appeared at the breakfast table; and this morning of all mornings it was quite natural she should be absent. But Mrs. Middleton and Bee, Judge Merlin, Mr. Middleton, Mr. Brudenell, Walter and Ishmael were present. It was in order that people should be merry on a marriage morning; but somehow or other that order was not followed. Judge Merlin, Mrs. Middleton and Bee, were unusually grave and silent; Mr. Brudenell was always sad; Ishmael was no conventional talker, and, therefore, could not seem other than he was—very serious. It was quite in vain that Mr. Middleton and Walter tried to get up a little jesting and badinage. And when the constraint of the breakfast table was over everyone felt relieved.

"Remember," said Mrs. Middleton, with her hand upon the back of her chair, "that the carriages will be at the door at half-past ten; it is now half-past nine."

"And that means we have but an hour to put on our wedding garments," said Walter. "Bee, have you got my finery ready?"

"You will find everything you require laid out on your bed, Walter."

"You are the best little sister that ever was born. I doubt whether I shall let Ishmael, or anyone else, have you until I get a wife of my own; and even then I don't know but what I shall want you home to look after her and the children!" rattled Walter, careless or unobservant of the deep blush that mantled the maiden's face.

"Ishmael," said the judge, "I wish you to take the fourth seat in the carriage with myself and daughter and Beatrice. Will you do so?"

Ishmael's emotions nearly choked him, but he answered: "Certainly, if you wish."

"The four bridesmaids will fill the second carriage, and Mr. and Mrs. Middleton, Mr. Brudenell and Walter the third. I do not know the arrangements made for our other friends; but I dare say it is all right. Oh, Ishmael, I feel as though we were arranging a procession to the grave instead of to the altar," he added, with a heavy sigh. Then correcting himself, he said:

"But this is all very morbid. So no more of it."

And the judge wrung Ishmael's hand; and each went his separate way to dress for the wedding.

Meanwhile the bride elect sat alone in her luxurious dressing room.

Around her, scattered over tables, chairs and stands, lay the

splendid paraphernalia of her bridal array—rich dresses, mantles, bonnets, veils, magnificent shawls, sparkling jewels, blooming flowers, intoxicating perfumes.

On the superb malachite stand beside her stood a silver tray, on which was arranged an elegant breakfast service of Bohemian china. But the breakfast was untasted and forgotten.

There was no one to watch her; she had sent her maid away with orders not to return until summoned by her bell.

And now, while her coffee unheeded grew cold, she sat, leaning forward in her easy chair, with her hands tightly clasped together over her knees, her tumbled black ringlets fallen down upon her dressing gown, and her eyes flared open and fixed in a dreadful stare upon the far distance as if spellbound by some horror there.

To have seen her thus, knowing that she was a bride elect, you might have judged that she was about to be forced into some loathed marriage, from which her whole tortured nature revolted.

And you would have judged truly. She was being thus forced into such a marriage, not by any tyrannical parent, or guardian, for flesh and blood could not have forced Claudia Merlin into any measure she had set her will against. She was forced by the demon Pride, who had taken possession of her soul!

And now she sat alone with her sin, dispossessed of all her better self, face to face with her lost soul!

She was roused by the entrance of Mrs. Middleton—Mrs. Middleton in full carriage dress—robe and mantle of mauve-colored moire antique, a white lace bonnet with mauve-colored flowers, and white kid gloves finished at the wrists with mauve ribbon quillings.

"Why, Claudia, is it possible? Not commenced dressing yet and everybody else ready, and the clock on the stroke of ten! What *have* you been thinking of, child?"

Claudia started like one suddenly aroused from sleep, threw her hands to her face as if to clear away a mist, and looked around.

But Mrs. Middleton had hurried to the door and was calling:

"Here! Alice! Laura! 'Gena! Letty! Where are you, my dears?"

Receiving no answer, she flew to the bell and rang it and brought Claudia's maid to the room.

"Ruth! hurry to the young ladies' room and give my compliments and ask them to come here as soon as possible! Miss Merlin is not yet dressed!"

The girl went on her errand and Mrs. Middleton turned again to Claudia:

"Not even eaten your breakfast yet! Oh, Claudia!" and she poured out a cup of coffee and handed it to her niece.

And Claudia drank it, because it was easier to do so than to expostulate.

At the moment that Claudia returned the cup the door opened and the four bridesmaids entered—all dressed in floating, cloudlike, misty white tulle, and crowned with wreaths of white roses and holding bouquets of the same.

They laid down their bouquets, drew off their white gloves and fluttered around the bride and with their busy fingers quickly dressed her luxuriant black hair, and arrayed her stately form in her superb bridal dress.

This dress was composed of an underskirt of the richest white satin and an upper robe of the finest Valenciennes lace looped up with bunches of orange flowers. A berthe of lace fell over the satin bodice. And a long veil of lace flowed from the queenly head down to the tiny foot. A wreath of orange flowers, sprinkled over with the icy dew of small diamonds, crowned her black ringlets. And diamonds adorned her neck, bosom, arms and stomacher. Her bouquet holder was studded with diamonds, and her initials on the white velvet cover of her prayer book were formed of tiny seedlike diamonds.

No sovereign queen on her bridal morn was ever more richly arrayed. But, oh! how deadly pale and cold she was!

"There!" they said, triumphantly, when they had finished dressing her, even to the arranging of the bouquet of orange flowers in its costly holder and putting it in her hand. "There!" And they wheeled the tall Psyche mirror up before her that she might view and admire herself.

She looked thoughtfully at the image reflected there. She looked so long that Mrs. Middleton, growing impatient, said:

"My love, it is time to go."

"Leave me alone for a few minutes, all of you! I will not keep you waiting long," said Claudia.

"She wishes to be alone to offer up a short prayer before going to be married," was the thought in the heart of each one of the party, as they filed out of the room.

Did Claudia wish to pray? Did she intend to ask God's protection against evil? Did she dare to ask His blessing on the act she contemplated?

We shall see.

She went after the last retreating figure and closed and bolted the door. Then she returned to her dressing bureau, opened a little secret drawer and took from it a tiny jar of rouge, and with a piece of cotton wool applied it to her deathly white cheeks until she had produced there an artificial bloom, more brilliant than that of her happiest days, only because it was more brilliant than that of nature. Then to

soften its fire she powdered her face with pearl white and finally with a fine handkerchief carefully dusted off the superfluous particles.

Having done this, she put away her cosmetics and took from the same receptacle a vial of the spirits of lavender and mixed a spoonful of it with water and drank it off.

Then she returned the vial to its place and locked up the secret drawer where she kept her deceptions.

She gave one last look at the mirror, saw that between the artificial bloom and the artificial stimulant her face presented a passable counterfeit of its long-lost radiance; she drew her bridal veil around so as to shade it a little, lowered her head and raised her bouquet, that her friends might not see the suspicious suddenness of the transformation from deadly pallor to living bloom;—for though Claudia, in an hour of hysterical passion, had discovered this secret of her toilet to Beatrice, yet she was really ashamed of it and wished to conceal it from all others.

She opened the door, went out and joined her friends in the hall, saying with a cheerfulness that she had found in the lavender vial:

“I am quite ready for the show now!”

But she kept her head lowered and averted, for a little while, though in fact her party were too much excited to scrutinize her appearance, especially as they had had a good view of her while making her toilet.

They went down into the drawing-room, where the family and their nearest relations were assembled and waiting for them.

Bee was there, looking lovely as usual. Bee, who almost always wore white when in full dress, now varied from her custom by wearing a glacé silk of delicate pale blue, with a white lace mantle and a white lace bonnet and veil. Bee did this because she did not mean to be mustered into the bride's service, or even mistaken by any person for one of the bridesmaids. Beyond her obligatory presence in the church as one of the bride's family, Bee was resolved to have nothing to do with the sacrilegious marriage.

“Come, my dear! Are you ready? How beautiful you are, my Claudia! I never paid you a compliment before, my child; but surely I may be excused for doing so now that you are about to leave me! ‘How blessings brighten as they take their flight,’ ” whispered the judge, as he met and kissed his daughter.

And certainly Claudia's beauty seemed perfectly dazzling this morning. She smiled a greeting to all her friends assembled there, and then gave her hand to her father, who drew it within his arm and led her to the carriage.

Ishmael, like one in a splendid, terrible dream, from which he could not wake, in which he was obliged to act, went up to Bee and drew her little white-gloved hand under his arm, and led her after the father and daughter.

The other members of the marriage party followed in order.

Besides Judge Merlin's brougham and Mr. Middleton's barouche, there were several other carriages drawn up before the house.

Bee surveyed this retinue and murmured:

"Indeed, except that we all wear light colors instead of black and the coachmen have no hat scarfs, this looks quite as much like a funeral as a wedding."

Ishmael did not reply; he could not wake from that dazzling, horrible dream.

When they were seated in the carriage, Claudia and Beatrice occupied the back seat; the judge and Ishmael the front one; the judge sat opposite Bee, and Ishmael opposite Claudia.

The rich drifts of shining white satin and misty white lace that formed her bridal dress floated around him; her foot inadvertently touched his, and her warm, balmy breath passed him. Never had he been so close to Claudia before; that carriage was so confined and crowded;—dread proximity! The dream deepened; it became a trance;—that strange trance that sometimes falls upon the victim in the midst of his sufferings, held Ishmael's faculties in abeyance and deadened his sense of pain.

And indeed the same spell, though with less force, acted upon all the party in that carriage. Its mood was expectant, excited, yet dreamlike. There was scarcely any conversation. There seldom is under such circumstances. Once the judge inquired:

"Bee, my dear, how is it that you are not one of Claudia's bridesmaids?"

"I did not wish to be, and Claudia was so kind as to excuse me," Beatrice replied.

"But why not, my love? I thought young ladies always liked to fill such positions."

Bee blushed and lowered her head, but did not reply.

Claudia answered for her:

"Beatrice does not like Lord Vincent; and does not approve of the marriage," she said, defiantly.

"Humph!" exclaimed the judge, and not another word was spoken during the drive.

It was a rather long one. The church selected for the performance of the marriage rites being St. John's at the West End of the town, where the bridegroom and his friends were to meet the bride and her attendants.

They reached the church at last; the other carriages arrived

a few seconds after them, and the whole party alighted and went in.

The bridegroom and his friends were already there. And the bridal procession formed and went up the middle aisle to the altar, where the bishop in his sacerdotal robes stood ready to perform the ceremony.

The bridal party formed before the altar, the bishop opened the book, and the ceremony commenced. It proceeded according to the ritual, and without the slightest deviation from commonplace routine.

When the bishop came to that part of the rites in which he utters the awful adjuration—"I require and charge you both, as ye shall answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured, that if any persons are joined together, otherwise than God's Word doth allow, their marriage is not lawful,"—Bee, who was standing with her mother and father near the bridal circle, looked up at the bride.

Oh! could Claudia, loving another, loathing the bridegroom, kneel in that sacred church, before that holy altar, in the presence of God's minister, in the presence of God himself, hear that solemn adjuration, and persevere in her awful sin?

Yes, Claudia could! as tens of thousands, from ignorance, from insensibility, or from recklessness, have done before her; and as tens of thousands more, from the same causes, will do after her!

The ceremony proceeded until it reached the part where the ring is placed upon the bride's finger, and all went well enough until, as they were rising from the prayer of "Our Father," the bride happened to lower her hand, and the ring, which was too large for her finger, dropped off, and rolled away, and passed out of sight.

The ceremony ended, and the ring was sought for; but could not be found then: and, I may as well tell you now, it has not been found yet.

Seeing at length that their search was quite fruitless, the gentlemen of the bridal train reluctantly gave up the ring for lost, and the whole party filed into the chancel, to enter their names in the register, that lay for this purpose on the communion table.

The bridegroom first approached and wrote his. It was a prolonged and sonorous roll of names, such as frequently compose the tail of a nobleman's title:

Malcolm—Victor—Stuart—Douglass—Gordon—Dugald, Viscount Vincent.

Then the bride signed hers, and the witnesses theirs.

When Mr. Brudenell came to sign his own name as one of the witnesses, he happened to glance at the bridegroom's long train of names. He read them over with a smile at their length, but his eye fastened upon the last one—"Dugald," "Dugald," "Dugald?" Herman Brudenell, like the immortal Burton, thought he had "heard that name before," in fact, was sure he had "heard that name before!" Yes, verily; he had heard it in connection with his sister's fatal flight, in which a certain Captain Dugald had been her companion! And he resolved to make cautious inquiries of the viscount. He had known Lord Vincent on the Continent, but he had either never happened to hear what his family name was, or if he had chanced to do so, he had forgotten the circumstance. At all events, it was not until the instant in which he read the viscount's signature in the register that he discovered the family name of Lord Vincent and the disreputable name of Eleanor Brudenell's unprincipled lover to be the same.

But this was no time for brooding over the subject! He affixed his own signature, which was the last one on the list, and then joined the bridal party, who were now leaving the church.

At the door a signal change took place in the order of the procession.

Lord Vincent, with a courtesy as earnest and a smile as beaming as gallantry and the occasion required, handed his bride into his own carriage.

Judge Merlin, Ishmael and Beatrice rode together.

And others returned in the order in which they had come.

Ishmael was coming out of that strange, benumbed state that had deadened for a while all his sense of suffering—coming back to a consciousness of utter bereavement and insupportable anguish—anguish written in such awful characters upon his pallid and writhen brow, that Beatrice and her uncle exchanged glances of wonder and alarm.

But Ishmael, in his fixed agony, did not perceive the looks of anxiety they turned toward him—did not even perceive the passage of time or space, until they arrived at home again, and the wedding guests began to alight from the carriages.

The party temporarily separated in the hall, the ladies dispersing each to her own chamber to make some trifling change in her toilet before appearing in the drawing-room.

"Ishmael, come here, my dear lad," said the judge, as soon as they were left alone.

Ishmael mechanically followed him to the little breakfast parlor of the family, where on the sideboard sat decanters of brandy and wine, and pitchers of water, and glasses of all shapes and sizes.

He poured out two glasses of brandy—one for himself and one for Ishmael.

"Let us drink the health of the newly married couple," he said, pushing one glass toward Ishmael, and raising the other to his own lips.

But Ishmael hesitated, and poured out a tumbler of pure water, saying, in a faint voice:

"I will drink her health in this!"

"Nonsense! put it down. You are chilled enough without drinking that to throw you into an ague! Drink something warm and strong, boy! drink something warm and strong! I tell you, I, for one, cannot get through this day without some such support as this," said the judge, authoritatively, as he took from the young man's nerveless hand the harmless glass of water, and put into it the perilous glass of brandy.

For ah! good men do wicked things sometimes, and wise men foolish ones.

Still Ishmael hesitated; for even in the midst of his great trouble he heard the "still, small voice" of some good angel—it might have been his mother's spirit—whispering him to dash from his lips the circean draught, that would indeed allay his sense of suffering for a few minutes, but might endanger his character through all his life and his soul through all eternity. The voice that whispered this, as I said, was a "still, small voice," speaking softly within him. But the voice of the judge was bluff and hearty, and he stood there, a visible presence, enforcing his advice with strength of action.

And Ishmael, scarcely well assured of what he did, put the glass to his lips and quaffed the contents, and felt at once falsely exhilarated.

"Come, now! We will go into the drawing-room! I dare say they are all down by this time," said the judge. And in they went.

He was right in his conjecture; the wedding guests were all assembled there.

And soon after his entrance the sliding doors between the drawing-room and the dining room were pushed back, and Devizac, who was the presiding genius of the wedding feast, appeared and announced that breakfast was served.

The company filed in—the bride and bridegroom walking together, and followed by the bridesmaids and the gentlemen of the party.

Ishmael gave his arm to Beatrice. Mr. Brudenell conducted Mrs. Middleton, and the judge led one of the lady guests.

The scene they entered upon was one of splendor, beauty, and luxury, never surpassed even by the great Vourienne and Devizac themselves! Painting, gilding and flowers had not been spared. The walls were covered with frescoes of Venus,

Psyche, Cupid, the graces and the muses, seen among the rosy bowers and shady groves of Arcadia. The ceiling was covered with celestial scenery, in the midst of which was seen the cloudy court of Jupiter and Juno and their attendant gods and goddesses; the pillars were covered with gilding and twined with flowers, and long wreaths of flowers connected one pillar with another, and festooned the doorways and windows and the corners of the room.

The breakfast table was a marvel of art—blazing with gold plate, blooming with beautiful and fragrant exotics, and intoxicating with the aroma of the richest and rarest viands.

At the upper end of the room a temporary raised and gilded balcony wreathed with roses was occupied by Dureezie's celebrated band, who, as the company came in, struck up an inspiring bridal march composed expressly for this occasion.

The wedding party took their seats at the table and the feasting began. The viands were carved and served and praised. The bride's cake was cut and the slices distributed. The ring fell to one of the bridesmaids and provoked the usual badinage. The wine circulated freely.

Mr. Middleton arose and in a neat little speech proposed the fair bride's health, which proposal was hailed with enthusiasm.

Judge Merlin, in another little speech, returned thanks to the company and begged leave to propose the bridegroom's health, which was duly honored.

Then it was Lord Vincent's turn to rise and express his gratitude and propose Judge Merlin's health.

This necessitated a second rising of the judge, who after making due acknowledgments of the compliment paid him, proposed—the fair bridesmaids.

And so the breakfast proceeded.

They sat at table an hour, and then, at a signal from Mrs. Middleton, all arose.

The gentlemen adjourned to the little breakfast parlor to drink a parting glass with their host in something stronger than the light French breakfast wines they had been quaffing so freely.

And the bride, followed by all her attendants, went up to her room to change her bridal robe and veil for her traveling dress and bonnet; as the pair were to take the one o'clock train to Baltimore en route for New York, Niagara and the Lakes.

She found her dressing room all restored to the dreary good order that spoke of abandonment. Her rich dresses and jewels and bridal presents were all packed up. And every trunk was locked and corded and ready for transportation to the railway station, except one large trunk that stood open, with its upper tray waiting for the bridal dress she was about to put off.

Ruth, who had been very busy with all this packing, while

the wedding party were at church and at breakfast, now stood with the brown silk dress and mantle that was to be Claudia's traveling costume, laid over her arm.

Claudia, assisted by Mrs. Middleton, changed her dress with the feverish haste of one who longed to get a painful ordeal over; and while Ruth hastily packed away the wedding finery and closed the last trunk, Claudia tied on her brown silk bonnet and drew on her gloves and expressed herself ready to depart.

They went downstairs to the drawing-room, where all the wedding guests were once more gathered to see the young pair off.

There was no time to lose, and so all her friends gathered around the bride to receive her adieus and to express their good wishes.

One by one she bade them farewell.

When she came to her cousin, Bee burst into tears and whispered:

"God forgive you, poor Claudia! God avert from you all evil consequences of your own act!"

She caught her breath, wrung Bee's hand and turned away, and looked around. She had taken leave of all except her father and Ishmael!

Her father she knew would accompany her as far as the railway station, for he had said as much.

But there was Ishmael!

As she went up to him slowly and fearfully every vein and artery in her body seemed to throb with the agony of her heart. She tried to speak; but could utter no articulate sound. She held out her hand; but he did not take it; then she lifted her beautiful eyes to his, with a glance so helpless, so anguished, so imploring, as if silently praying from him some kind word, before she should go, that Ishmael's generous heart was melted and he took her hand and pressing it while he spoke, said in low and fervent tones:

"God bless you, Lady Vincent. God shield you from all evil! God save you in every crisis of your life!"

And she bowed her head, lowly and humbly, to receive this benediction as though it had been uttered by an authorized minister of God.

CHAPTER LXVII.

BUT a mist fell before Ishmael's eyes, and when it cleared away Claudia was gone.

The young bridesmaids were chattering gayly, in a low, melodious tone, with each other, and with the gentlemen of

the party, filling the room with a musical hum of many happy voices.

But all this seemed unreal and dreadful, like the illusions of troubled sleep. And so Ishmael left the drawing-room and went up into the office, to see if perhaps he could find real life there.

There lay the parcels of papers tied up with red tape, the open books that he had consulted the day before, and the letters that had come by the morning's mail.

He sat down wearily to the table, and began to open his letters. One by one he read and laid them aside. One important letter, bearing upon a case he had on hand, he laid by itself.

Then rising, he gathered up his documents, put them into his pocket, took his hat and gloves and went to the City Hall.

This day of suffering, like all other days, was a day of duties also.

It was now one o'clock, the hour at which the train started which carried Claudia away.

It was also the hour at which a case was appointed to be heard before the Judge of the Orphan's Court—a case in which the guardianship of certain fatherless and motherless children was disputed between a grandmother and an uncle, and in which Ishmael was counsel for the plaintiff. He appeared in court, punctually to the minute, found his client waiting for him there, and as soon as the judge had taken his seat, the young counsel opened the case. By a strong effort of will, he wrested his thoughts from his own great sorrow, and engaged them in the interests of the anxious old lady, who was striving for the possession of her grandchildren only from the love she bore them and their mother, her own dead daughter; while her opponent only wished to have the management of their large fortune.

It was Nature that pleaded through the lips of the eloquent young counsel, and he gained this case, also.

But he was ill in mind and body. He could scarcely bear the thanks and congratulations of his client and her friends.

The old lady had retained him by one large fee, and now she placed another and a larger one in his hands; but he could not have told whether the single banknote was for five dollars or five hundred, as he mechanically received it and placed it in his pocketbook.

And then, with the courteous bow and smile, never omitted, because they were natural and habitual, he turned and left the court room.

"What is the matter with Worth?" inquired one lawyer.

"Can't imagine; he looks very ill; shouldn't wonder if he was going to have a congestion of the brain. It looks like it. He works too hard," replied another.

Old Wiseman, the law thunderer, who had been the counsel opposed to Ishmael in this last case, and who, in fact, was always professionally opposed to him, but, nevertheless, personally friendly toward him, had also noticed his pale, haggard and distracted looks, and now hurried after him in the fear that he should fall before reaching home.

He overtook Ishmael in the lobby. The young man was standing leaning on the balustrades at the head of the stairs, as if unable to take another step.

Wiseman bent over him.

"Worth, my dear fellow, what is the matter with you? Does it half kill you to overthrow me at law?"

"I—fear that I am not well," replied Ishmael, in a hollow voice, and with a haggard smile.

"What is it? Only exhaustion, I hope? You have been working too hard, and you never even left the court room to take any refreshments to-day! You are too much in earnest, my young friend! You take too much pains! You apply yourself too closely. Why, bless my life, you could floor us all any day with half the trouble! But you must always use a trip hammer to drive tin tacks! Take my arm, and let us go and get something."

And the stout lawyer drew the young man's arm within his own, and led him to a restaurant that was kept on the same floor for the convenience of the courts and their officers, and other habitués of the City Hall.

Wiseman called for the best old Otard brandy, and poured out half a tumbler full, and offered it to Ishmael. It was a dose that might have been swallowed with impunity by a seasoned old toper like Wiseman; but certainly not by an abstinent young man like Ishmael, who, yielding to the fatal impulse to get rid of present suffering by any means, at any cost, or any risk, took the tumbler and swallowed the brandy.

Ah! Heaven have mercy on the sorely tried and tempted!

This was only the third glass of alcoholic stimulants that Ishmael had ever taken, in the whole course of his life.

On the first occasion, the day of Claudia's betrothal, the glass had been placed in his hand, and urged upon his acceptance by his honored old friend, Judge Merlin.

On the second occasion, the morning of this day, of Claudia's marriage, the glass had also been offered him by Judge Merlin.

And on the third occasion, this afternoon of the terrible day of trial and suffering, it was placed to his lips by the respectable old lawyer, Wiseman.

Alas! alas!

On the first occasion, Ishmael had protested long before he yielded; on the second he had hesitated a little while; but on

the third, he took the offered glass and drank the brandy without an instant's doubt or pause.

Lord, be pitiful!

And oh, Nora, fly down from Heaven on wings of love, and watch over your son and save him—from his friends!—lest he fall into deeper depths than any from which he has so nobly struggled forth. For he is suffering, tempted and human! And there never lived but one perfect man, and he was the Son of God!

"Well?" said old Wiseman as he received the glass from Ishmael's hand and sat it down.

"I thank you; it has done me good; I feel much better; you are very kind," said Ishmael.

"I wish you would really think so, and go into partnership with me; my business is very heavy; much more than I can manage alone, now that I am growing old and stout; and I must have somebody, and I would rather have you than anyone else. You would succeed to the whole business after my death, you know."

"Thank you; your offer is very flattering. I will think it over, and talk with you on some future occasion. Now I feel that I must return home, while I have strength to do so," replied Ishmael.

"Very well, then, my dear fellow, I will let you off."

And they shook hands and parted.

Ishmael, feeling soothed, strengthened and exhilarated set off to walk home. But this feeling gradually passed off, giving place to a weakness, heaviness and feverishness that warned him he was in no state to appear at Judge Merlin's dinner table.

So when he approached the house, he opened a little side gate leading into the back grounds, and strayed into the shrubbery, feeling every minute more feverish, heavy and drowsy.

At last he strayed into an arbor, quite at the bottom of the shrubberies, where he sank down upon the circular bench and fell into a deep sleep.

Meanwhile, up at the house, changes had taken place. The wedding guests had all departed. The festive garments had been laid away. The decorated dining room had been shut up. The household had returned to its usual sober aspect, and the plain family dinner was laid in the little breakfast parlor. But the house was very sad and silent and lonely because its queen was gone. At the usual dinner hour, six o'clock, the family assembled at the table.

"Where is Ishmael, uncle?" inquired Beatrice.

"I do not know, my dear," replied the judge, whose heart was sore with the wrench that had torn his daughter from him.

"Do you, papa?"

"No, dear."

"Mamma, have you seen Ishmael since the morning?"

"No, child."

"Nor you, Walter?"

"Nor I, Bee."

Mr. Brudenell looked up at the fair young creature, who took thought of his absent son, and volunteered to say:

"He had a case before the Orphans' Court, to-day, I believe. But the court is adjourned, I know, because I met the judge an hour ago at the Capitol; so I suppose he will be here soon."

Bee bowed in acknowledgment of this information, but she did not feel at all reassured. She had noticed Ishmael's dreadful pallor that morning; she felt how much he suffered, and she feared some evil consequences; though her worst suspicions never touched the truth.

"Uncle," she said, blushing deeply to be obliged still to betray her interest in one whom she was forced to remember, because everyone else forgot him—"Uncle, had we not better send Powers up to Ishmael's room to see if he has come in and let him know that dinner is on the table?"

"Certainly, my dear; go, Powers, and if Mr. Worth is in his room, let him know that dinner is ready."

Powers went, but soon returned with the information that Mr. Worth was neither in his room nor in the office, nor anywhere else in the house.

"Some professional business has detained him, he will be home after a while," said the judge.

But Bee was anxious, and when dinner was over she went upstairs to a window that overlooked the avenue, and watched; but, of course, in vain. Then, with the restlessness common to intense anxiety, she came down, and went into the shrubbery to walk. She paced about very uneasily until she had tired herself, and then turned toward a secluded arbor at the bottom of the grounds to rest herself. She put aside the vines that overhung the doorway and entered.

What did she see?

Ishmael extended upon the bench, with the late afternoon sun streaming through a crevice in the arbor, shining full upon his face, which was also plagued with flies!

She had found him then, but how?

At first she thought he was only sleeping; and she was about to withdraw from the arbor, when the sound of his breathing caught her ear and alarmed her, and she crept back and cautiously approached and looked over him.

His face was deeply flushed; the veins of his temples were swollen; and his breathing was heavy and labored. In her fright Bee caught up his hand and felt his pulse. It was full,

hard and slowly throbbing. She thought that he was very ill—dangerously ill, and she was about to spring up and rush to the house for help, when, in raising her head, she happened to catch his breath.

And all the dreadful truth burst upon Bee's mind, and overwhelmed her with mortification and despair!

With a sudden gasp and a low wail, she sank on her knees at his side and dropped her head in her open hands and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, Ishmael! Ishmael, is it so? Have I lived to see you thus? Can a woman reduce a man to this? A proud and selfish woman have such power so to mar God's noblest work? Oh, Ishmael, my love! my love! I love you better than I love all the world besides! And I love you better than anyone else ever did or ever can; yet, yet, I would rather see you stark dead before me than to see you thus! Oh, Heaven! Oh, Savior! Oh, Father of Mercies, have pity on him and save him!" she cried.

And she wrung her hands and bent her head to look at him more closely, and her large tears dropped upon his face!

He stirred, opened his eyes, rolled them heavily, became half conscious of some one weeping over him, turned clumsily and relapsed into insensibility.

At his first motion Bee had sprung up and fled from the arbor, at the door of which she stood, with throbbing heart, watching him, through the vines. She saw that he had again fallen into that deep and comatose sleep. And she saw that his flushed and fevered face was more than ever exposed to the rays of the sun and the plague of the flies. And she crept cautiously back again, and drew her handkerchief from her pocket and laid it over his face, and turned and hurried, broken spirited, from the spot.

She gained her own room and threw herself into her chair in a passion of tears and sobs.

Nothing that had ever happened in all her young life had ever grieved her anything like this. She had loved Ishmael with all her heart, and she knew that Ishmael loved Claudia with all of his; but the knowledge of this fact had never brought to her the bitter sorrow that the sight of Ishmael's condition had smitten her with this afternoon. For there was scarcely purer love among the angels in heaven than was that of Beatrice for Ishmael. First of all she desired his good; next his affection; next his presence; but there was scarcely selfishness enough in Bee's beautiful nature to wish to possess him all for her own.

First his good! And here, weeping, sobbing and praying by turns, she resolved to devote herself to that object; to do all that she possibly could to shield him from the suspicion

of this night's event; and to save him from falling into a similar misfortune.

She remained in her own room until tea time, and then bathed her eyes, and smoothed her hair, and went down to join the family at the table.

"Well, Bee," said the judge, "have you found Ishmael yet?"

Bee hesitated, blushed, reflected a moment, and then answered:

"Yes, uncle; he is sleeping; he is not well; and I would not have him disturbed if I were you; for sleep will do him more good than anything else."

"Certainly. Why, Bee, did you ever know me to have anybody waked up in the whole course of my life? Powers, and the rest of you, hark ye: Let no one call Mr. Worth! Let him sleep until the last trump sounds, or until he wakes up of his own accord!"

Powers bowed, and said he would see the order observed.

Soon after tea was over, the family, fatigued with the day's excitement, retired to bed.

Bee went up to her room in the back attic; but she did not go to bed, or even undress, for she knew that Ishmael was locked out; and so she threw a light shawl around her, and seated herself at the open back window, which from its high point of view commanded every nook and cranny of the back grounds, to watch until Ishmael should wake up and approach the house, so that she might go down and admit him quietly, without disturbing the servants and exciting their curiosities and conjectures. No one should know of Ishmael's misfortune, for she would not call it fault, if any vigilance of hers could shield him. All through the still evening, all through the deep midnight, Bee sat and watched.

When Ishmael had fallen asleep, the sun was still high above the Western horizon; but when he awoke the stars were shining.

He raised himself to a sitting posture, and looked around him, utterly bewildered and unable to collect his scattered faculties, or to remember where he was, or how he came there, or what had occurred, or who he himself really was—so death-like had been his sleep.

He had no headache; his previous habits had been too regular, his blood was too pure, and the brandy was too good for that. He was simply bewildered, but utterly bewildered, as though he had waked up in another world.

He was conscious of a weight upon his heart, but could not remember the cause of it; and whether it was grief or remorse, or both, he could not tell. He feared that it was both.

Gradually memory and misery returned to him; the dreadful day; the marriage; the feast; the parting; the lawsuit;

the two glasses of brandy, and their mortifying consequences! All the events of that day lay clearly before him now! that horrible day begun in unutterable sorrow, and ended in humiliating sin!

Was it himself, Ishmael Worth, who had suffered this sorrow, yielded to this temptation, and fallen into this sin? To what had his inordinate earthly affections brought him? He was no longer "the chevalier without fear and without reproach." He had fallen, fallen, fallen!

He remembered that when he had sunk to sleep the sun was shining and smiling all over the beautiful garden, and that even in his half-drowsy state he had noticed its glory. The sun was gone now! It had set upon his humiliating weakness! The day had given up the record of his sin and passed away forever! The day would return no more to reproach him, but its record would meet him in the judgment!

He remembered that once in his deep sleep he had half awakened and found what seemed a weeping angel bending over him, and that he had tried to rouse himself to speak; but in the effort he had only turned over and tumbled into a deeper oblivion than ever.

Who was that pitying angel visitant?

The answer came like a shock of electricity. It was Bee! Who else should it have been? It was Bee! She had sought him out when he was lost; she had found him in his weakness; she had dropped tears of love and sorrow over him.

At that thought new shame, new grief, new remorse swept in upon his soul.

He sprang upon his feet, and in doing so dropped a little white drift upon the ground. He stooped and picked it up.

It was the fine white handkerchief that on first waking up he had plucked from his face. And he knew by its soft thin feeling and its delicate scent of violets, Bee's favorite perfume, that it was her handkerchief and she had spread it as a veil over his exposed and feverish face. That little wisp of cambric was redolent of Bee! of her presence, her purity, her tenderness.

It seemed a mere trifle; but it touched the deepest springs of his heart, and, holding it in both his hands, he bowed his humbled head upon it and wept.

When a man like Ishmael weeps it is in no gentle summer shower I assure you; but as the breaking up of great fountains, the rushing of mighty torrents, the coming of a flood.

He wept long and convulsively. And his deluge of tears relieved his surcharged heart and brain and did him good. He breathed more freely; he wiped his face with this dear handkerchief, and then, all dripping wet with tears as it was, he pressed it to his lips and placed it in his bosom, over his

heart, and registered a solemn vow in Heaven that this first fault of his life should also, with God's help, be his last.

Then he walked forth into the starlit garden, murmuring to himself:

"By a woman came sin and death into the world, and by a woman came redemption and salvation. Oh, Claudia, my Eve! farewell! farewell! And Bee, my Mary, hail!"

The holy stars no longer looked down reproachfully upon him; the harmless little insect choristers no longer mocked him; love and forgiveness beamed down from the pure light of the first, and cheering hope sounded in the gleeful songs of the last.

Ishmael walked up the gravel walk between the shrubbery and the house. Once, when his face was toward the house, he looked up at Bee's back window. It was open and he saw a white, shadowy figure just within it.

Was it Bee?

His heart assured him that it was; and that anxiety for him had kept her there awake and watching.

As he drew near the house, quite uncertain as to how he should get in, he saw that the shadowy, white figure disappeared from the window; and when he went up to the back door, with the intention of rapping loudly until he should wake up the servants and gain admission, his purpose was forestalled, by the door being softly opened by Bee, who stood with a shaded taper behind it.

"Oh, Bee!"

"Oh, Ishmael!"

Both spoke at once, and in a tone of irrepressible emotion.

"Come in, Ishmael," she next said, kindly.

"You know, Bee?" he asked, sadly, as he entered.

"Yes, Ishmael! Forgive me for knowing, for it prevented others finding out! And your secret could not rest safer, or with a truer heart than mine."

"I know it, dear Bee! dear sister, I know it. And Bee! Listen! That glass of brandy was only the third of any sort of spirituous liquor that I ever tasted in my life! And I solemnly swear in the presence of Heaven and before you that it shall be the very last! Never, no, never, even as a medicine, will I place the fatal poison to my lips again!"

"I believe you, Ishmael! And I am very happy! Thank God!" she said, giving him her hand.

"Dear Bee! Holy angel! I am scarcely worthy to touch it," he said, bowing humbly and reverently over that little white hand.

"There shall be more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." Good night, Ishmael," said Bee, sweetly, as

she put the taper in his hand and glided like a spirit from his presence.

She was soon sleeping beside her baby sister.

And Ishmael went upstairs to bed. And the troubled night closed in peace.

The further career of "Ishmael," together with the after fate of all the characters mentioned in this work, will be found in the sequel to and final conclusion of this volume, under the name of "Self-Raised; or, From the Depths."

(4)

THE END.

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